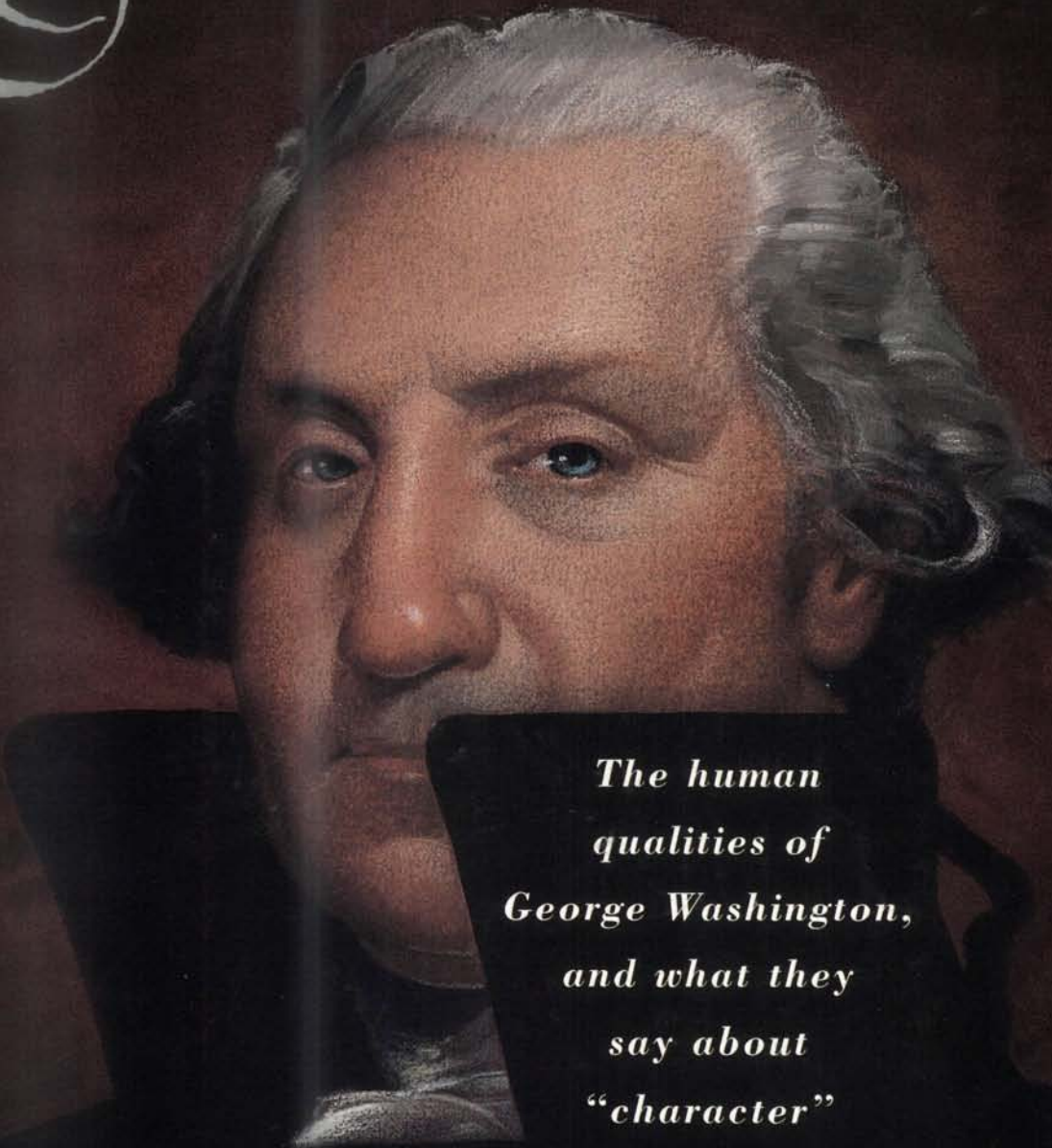


The Atlantic Monthly

JANUARY 1996

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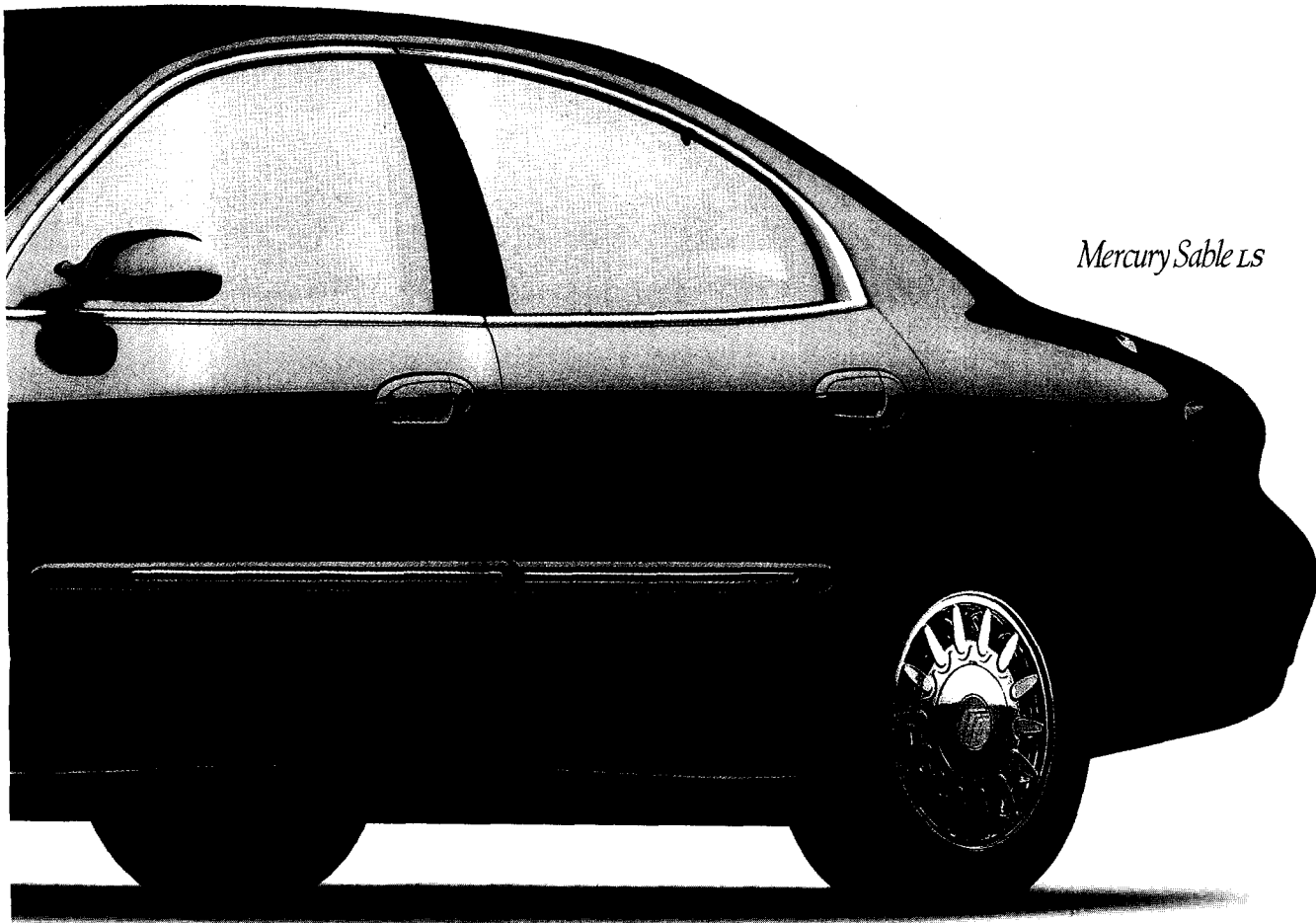
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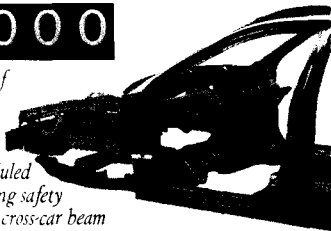


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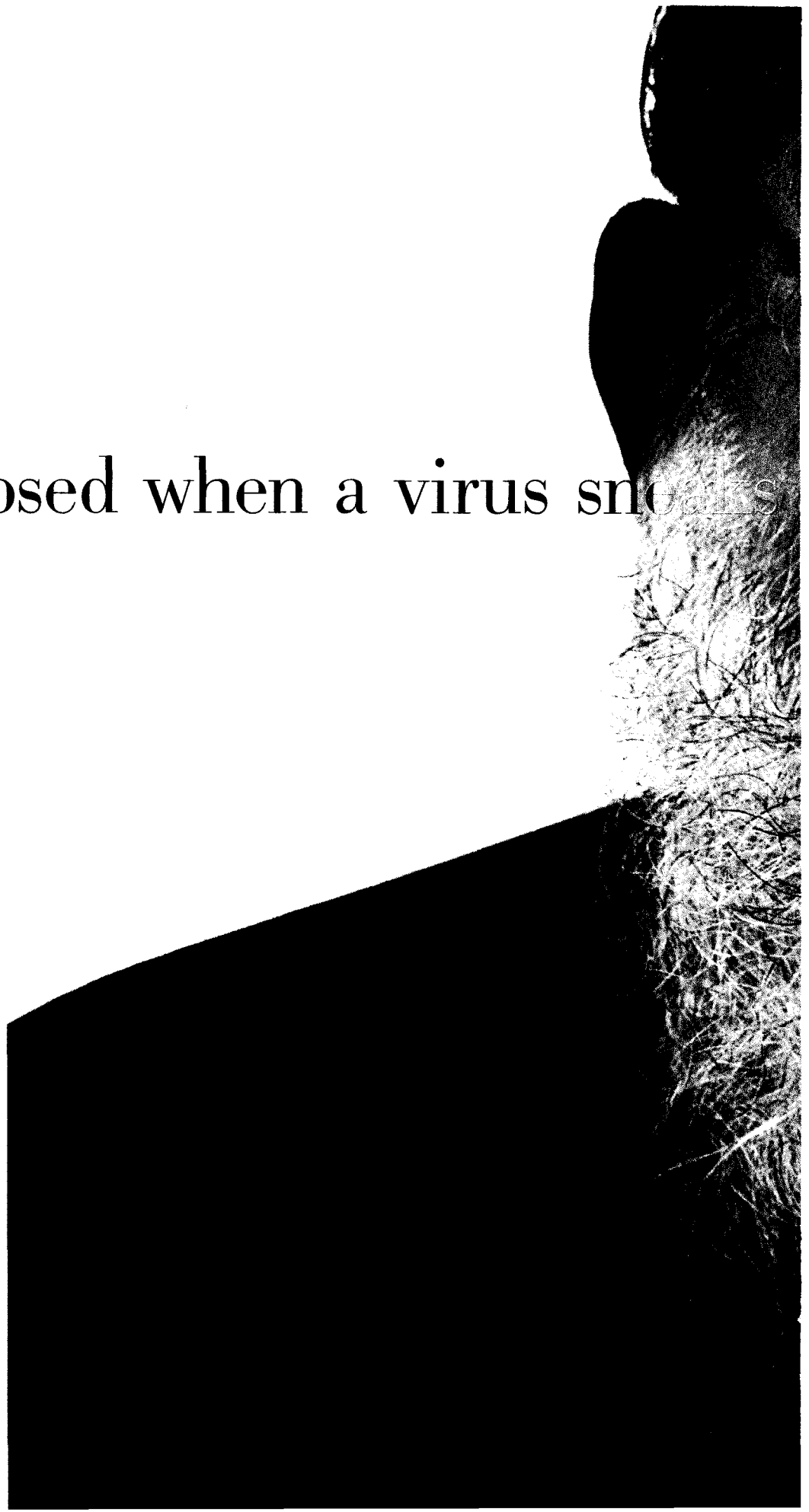
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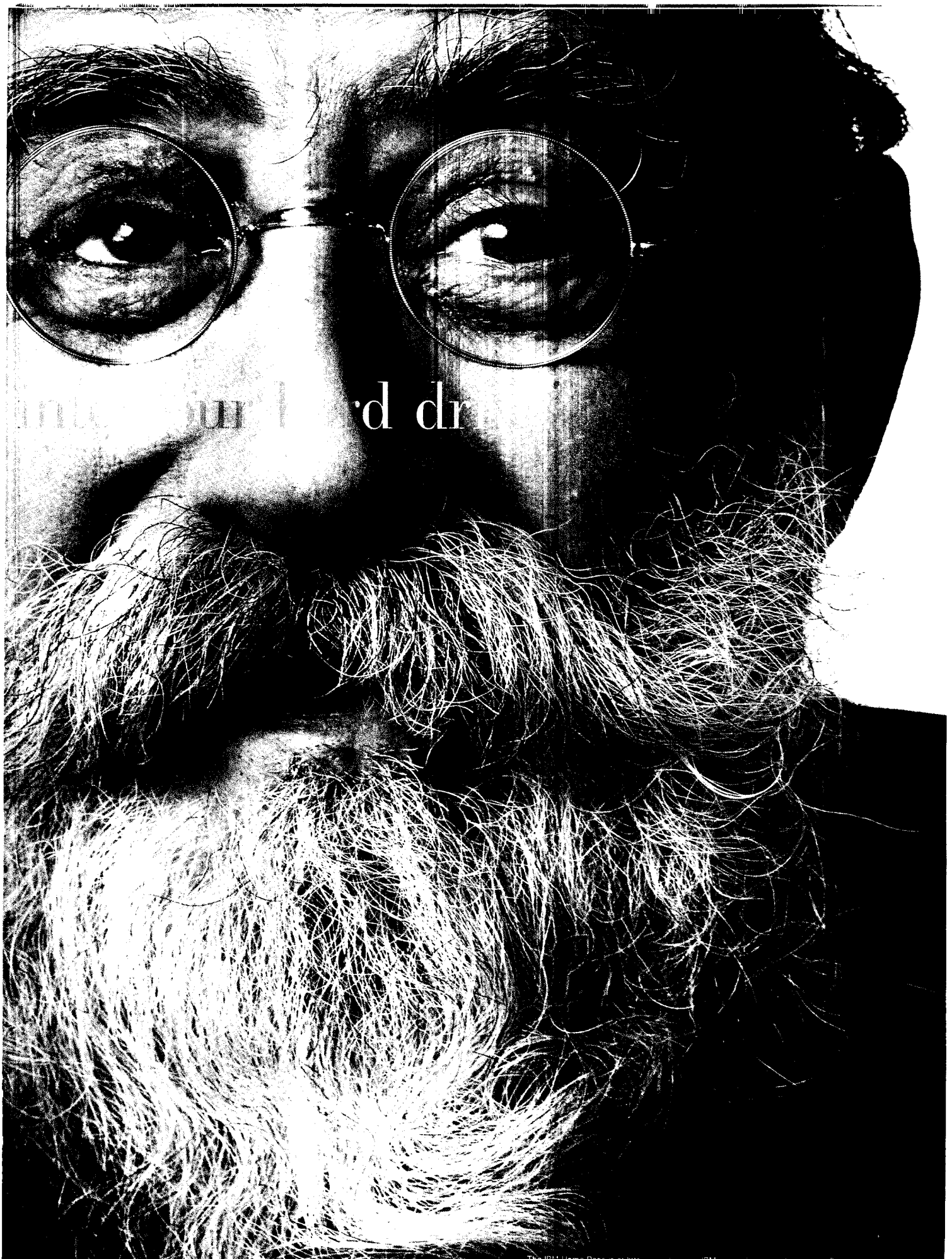
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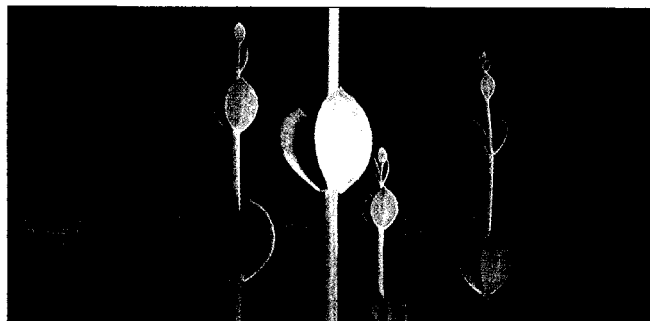




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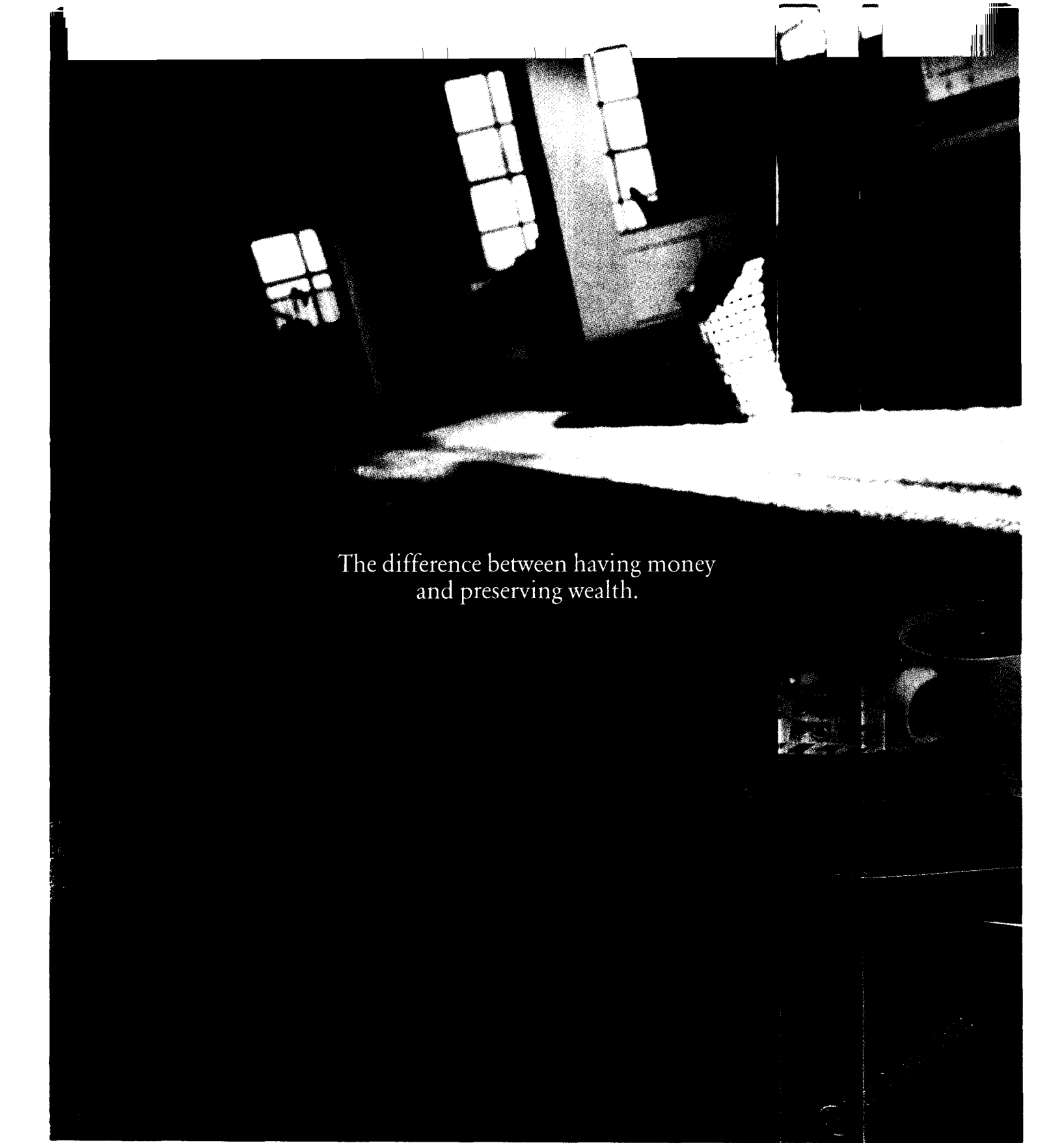
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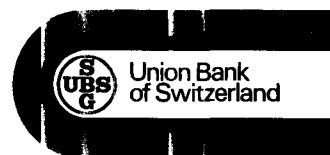
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AS soon as a letter to the editor arrives at our offices, it is labeled with a gummed yellow rectangle that bears the words "The Mail." During the past few months we have put such rectangles on more than 300 letters pertaining to George McKenna's cover story "On Abortion: A Lincolnian Position" (September, 1995). Letters about that article were published in last month's issue, and more appear in this month's—and the letters continue to arrive. We have received more mail about this article than about any other in years—more even than about Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's "Dan Quayle Was Right" (April, 1993).

How to characterize the response to McKenna? The best way to assess it, of course, is simply to read the letters column. Whether agreeing fiercely or disagreeing fiercely with McKenna's position—which argued for a tough national anti-abortion strategy that nonetheless leaves intact a woman's legal right to have an abortion—the letter writers by and large offer arguments that reflect careful thought and in many cases passionate commitment. Anger and protest have typically been channeled into vigorous prose. We have read with interest all the letters we received on the McKenna article. We wish we could publish more of them.

And then there were the letters that said, essentially, "Cancel my subscription." We receive a few of these every month, ob-

jecting to one article or another, and they always prompt a sigh. The sigh is not because of the loss of income, though we regret losing a subscriber. It is rather because such letters reflect a misunderstanding of *The Atlantic Monthly's* very purpose.

Ours is not an ideological magazine, like *National Review* or *The Nation*—the sort of magazine that might justifiably be punished for "heresy" by an act of defection. We are an invitation-al forum, not the pulpit of an established church. Only on rare occasions has this magazine published unsigned editorials meant to put forward an institutional point of view—for to do so with any regularity would imply that everything else in the magazine was selected to advance some broader, though perhaps hidden, agenda. Indeed, one essential point of this enterprise from the outset has been to provide a place where diverse perspectives on matters of national importance—perspectives grounded in logic and facts as opposed to emotional rhetoric, and expressed reasonably and tastefully—can get a full public hearing. The founding editors wrote in the first issue of the magazine that *The Atlantic* would be the organ "of no party or clique." We are strict constructionists with regard to this clause of our constitution.

For the record, we do of course cancel subscriptions when so requested. We also welcome anyone back. —THE EDITORS

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Barbara Wallraff ("Life's Choreographer") is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.

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LETTERS

Female Circumcision

Linda Burstyn ("Female Circumcision Comes to America," October *Atlantic*) is right on target. Female genital mutilation is child abuse, a serious human-rights violation, and a crime as serious as rape. The United States needs to outlaw the practice, to see that its practitioners are prosecuted, and to do everything possible through international organizations to eliminate the practice worldwide.

Respect for cultural differences cannot justify toleration of genocide, torture, slavery, child prostitution, and other violations of universal human rights. Female genital mutilation is no different from these other crimes.

Edd Doerr
American Humanist Association
Amherst, N.Y.

Linda Burstyn's article is based on claims of a dubious character, to say the least. The mention of cultural relativity in connection with female genital mutilation is a laughable attempt at being cynical. The whole story, in fact, is laughable journalism—a collection of unchecked claims and impromptu interviews of nameless men.

I am not sure how much FGM is practiced in America or by whom. Mimi Ramsey says that families chip in to pay the airfare for a traditional person to perform female circumcision. What nationality are these families? Among the several Ethiopian families I know all over the United States, I have not heard of even one that practices female circumcision. I realize this does not give me the authority to say that no Ethiopian practices female circumcision. But I can confidently say that an appreciable percentage of urbanized Ethiopians at home and abroad have abandoned female circumcision altogether—not only because of the suspiciously unscientific claim that it has an adverse effect on female sexuality but

also because it is now rightly regarded as a hazardous ritual.

Mimi Ramsey need not claim Ethiopian parentage to prove that some depraved parents in Ethiopia have their children mutilated in an unspeakable manner. Unfortunately, barbaric acts are performed on children all over the world, the extent of barbarism being greater among the depraved. The unfortunate Ramsey perhaps needs medical attention even more than the money she is trying to attract from generous, liberal Americans who are often exploited by such characters.

Abebe Semegn
New York, N.Y.

By any logical thinking, cultural relativism entails that our culture can assert itself within its purview. It should be glaringly obvious that our commitment to working out contradictions within our culture, such as racism and other forms of oppression that preclude autonomous choice, does not entail abdicating the very values in service to which we try to end oppression and domination. Using our respect for difference to justify letting people destroy the future autonomy of children is just self-contradictory—and, frankly, stupid.

Robert T. Fancher
New York, N.Y.

Why, oh, why, did "Female Circumcision Comes to America" give no information as to just how the first bill introduced by Representatives Pat Schroeder and Barbara-Rose Collins "died in the previous Congress"? Who killed it, and how? Whom should we write or call to encourage the passage of the law? How could such an article be so apolitical?

Joan Strasser
Albany, Calif.

Linda Burstyn replies:

The anti-FGM legislation first proposed by Schroeder and Collins died from the inertia that often kills bills low

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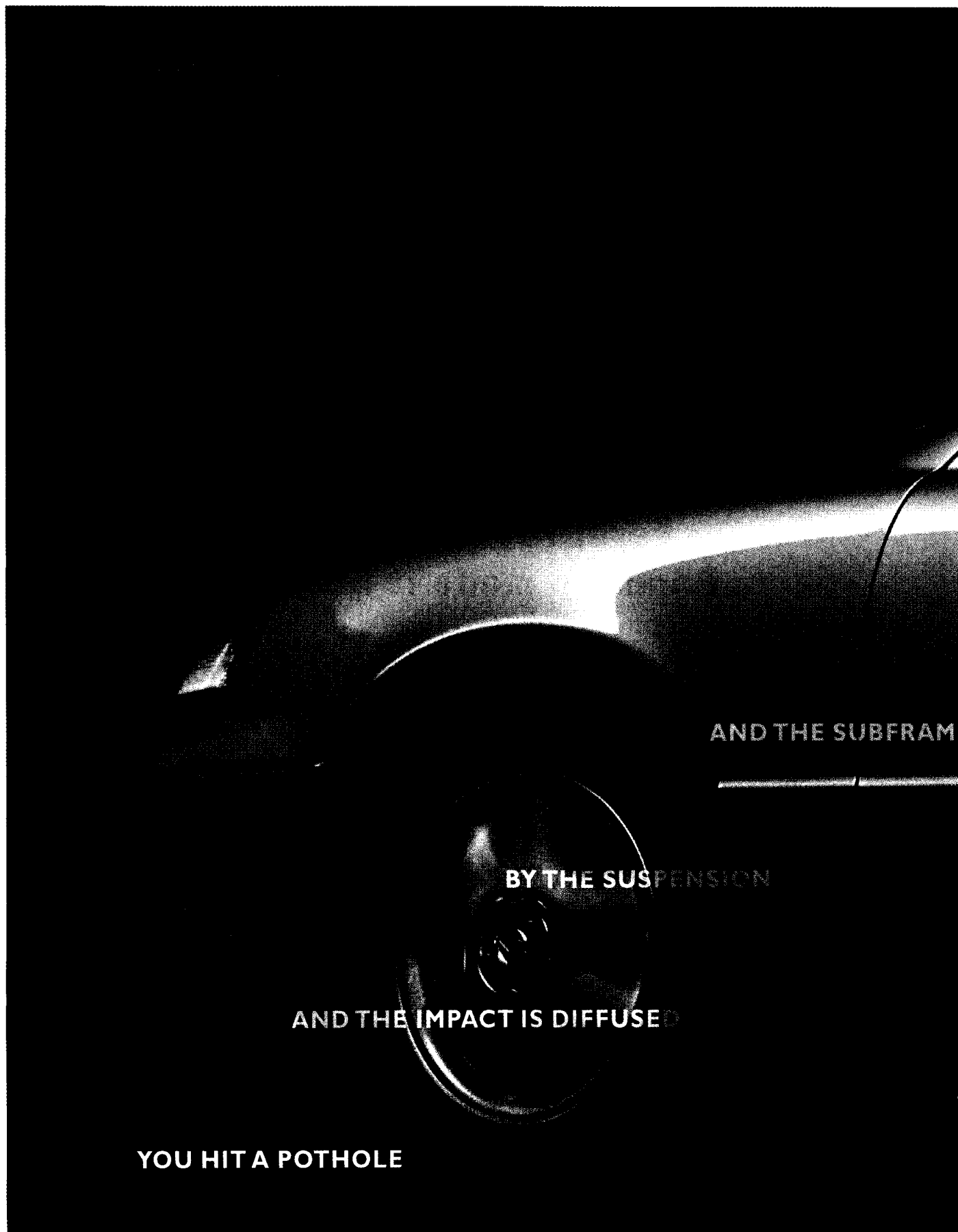


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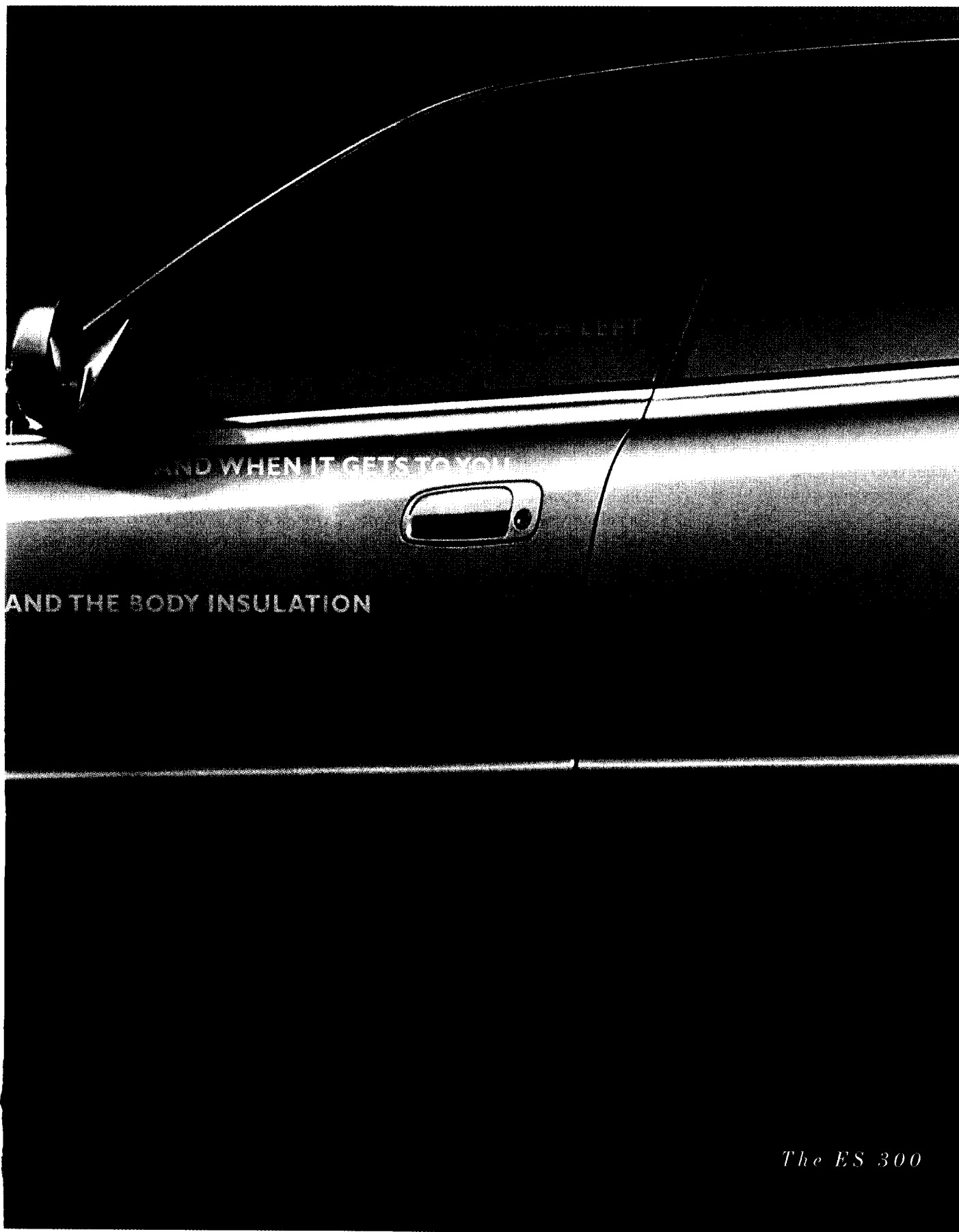
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in congressional priority. Technically, the House passed the conference report that contained the legislation, and the Senate simply never got to the legislation to vote on it one way or the other.

At the time of this writing the anti-FGM legislation in the House (HR941) and the Senate (S1030) has been sent to the Judiciary Committee in the Senate and the Judiciary and Commerce committees in the House. So far no action has been taken on the legislation. Those who are interested in voicing their opinions about these bills can write to the chairpersons of these committees or write or call their representatives or senators.

Slavery and Jews

Readers of "Slavery and the Jews" (September *Atlantic*), by Winthrop D. Jordan, should be informed that in January of last year, in an action that was virtually unprecedented in its 111-year history, the American Historical Association issued a policy resolution that "condemns as false any statement alleging that Jews played a disproportionate role in the exploitation of slave labor or in the Atlantic slave trade." The AHA was defending the historical record from egregious assaults, staged by those using the tract under review as a guide, to assign Jews a major role in the Atlantic slave system. The statement that was published along with the resolution, written by David Brion Davis and Seymour Drescher, "noted experts on the history of slavery," concluded that these "claims so misrepresent the historical record . . . that we believe them only to be part of a long anti-Semitic tradition that presents Jews as negative central actors in human history."

Given what Davis called "the very marginal place of Jews in the history of the overall system" (*New York Review of Books*, December 22, 1994), it is unfortunate that Winthrop Jordan chose to dwell on their role in the Dutch trade. For even here, Davis explained (citing the work of the Dutch historians Pieter Emmer and Johannes Postma), "Jews had a very limited and subordinate role even at the height of the Dutch slave trade in the 17th century." As Drescher has noted, in the British academic journal *Immigrants and Minorities* (July, 1993), Jews' investment share in the Dutch West India Company at this

peak period "amounted to only 0.5 percent of the company's capital." And since Jordan chose to mention Brazil (New Holland), he should have indicated that Jews were allowed to play a role there only for about twenty-five years, during which less than one percent of the slaves ever imported into Brazil were landed there. He might also have said that Jews owned only six percent of Brazilian plantations during those years.

The Davis-Drescher statement concluded by observing that "Jews played only a nominal role in the slave system in the American South. Never more than a tiny fraction of the white population, they never formed more than a minuscule proportion of slave holders." Jordan could have informed his readers that in 1830, the year on which the tract under review dwells, there were only 1,500 Jews in the American South and, as the historian Harold Brackman has shown, only twenty-three of the 59,000 slave holders who owned twenty or more slaves were Jews. Indeed, in 1830 African-American slave holders outnumbered Jewish ones by fifteen to one. In short, Jews had a negligible role in American slavery and in the Atlantic slave trade.

Eunice G. Pollack
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Winthrop Jordan's review of the Nation of Islam's *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* demonstrates conclusively that the key premises of the book (Jewish domination of the Atlantic slave trade and a decisive role in American slavery) are absolute fiction. However, Professor Jordan should have warned readers that this is not a serious piece of history at all, but rather a collection of anti-Semitic deception and pseudo-scholarship. To cite just a few examples:

1) The anonymous authors actually refer, apparently with a collective straight face, to "the Jewish pilgrim fathers."

2) The book asserts that Jews used black slaves in numbers disproportionately greater than "any other ethnic or religious group" in the New World. The fact is that there were twenty Jews—less than 0.2 percent—among the 12,000 southerners who owned fifty or more slaves in 1830. That year's census records that 3,775 free blacks owned 12,760 slaves.

3) The authors assert that Jewish complicity in the slave trade "incited the

moral indignation of Europe's Gentile population" and led to the expulsion of the Jews from most European countries by the year 1500. It's hard to decide whether to laugh or cry after reading such fantastic nonsense.

Henry Louis Gates, the chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard University, has called this book "one of the most sophisticated instances of hate literature yet compiled," concluding that it "massively misrepresents the historical record, largely through a process of cunningly selective quotation of often reputable sources."

One could make a persuasive argument that this book should never have been reviewed at all in a serious journal. But as a responsible historian, Winthrop Jordan should have made the character and purpose of the book very clear to his readers.

S. M. Stern
Boston, Mass.

The *Secret Relationship* does not deserve the legitimacy of a review.

Winthrop Jordan chose to argue with the Nation of Islam as if all the academic facts in the world could somehow persuade them that their history is flawed. What Jordan doesn't understand is that history is meaningless to Louis Farrakhan and his minions. Enlightened scholarly analysis (especially from a white scholar) has no meaning to those who practice the art of deception and propaganda.

For example, on page 211 of *The Secret Relationship*, Jews are said to have helped to suppress the famous slave revolt led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831. And indeed, a few Jewish-sounding names appear on the master lists of the hundreds of Virginia state militiamen who were called out to quell that violent revolt. This is of about as much historical importance as the fact that some of the militiamen were left-handed or that some were married.

Some books are just not worth talking about, and some books are not worth the dignity of a scholarly review. Some books deserve only the dignity of the big round file. *The Secret Relationship* is one of them.

Martin S. Goldman
*Director, The Center for the Study of
Jewish-Christian Relations
Merrimack College
North Andover, Mass.*

It is no secret that some Europeans, among them some Jews, participated in the slave trade. Contrary to what many believe, however, they bought their slaves from Africans engaged in slave trade on the coast of western Africa, and did not raid villages, as the Arabs had done in eastern Africa and continued to do into the twentieth century. The island of Zanzibar, an Islamic state, was utilized as a holding pen for slaves captured by Arabs from raids in the interior and traded throughout the Arab world.

England, France, and America stopped the trade and slavery in the nineteenth century, whereas Arabs did so only in the 1960s, and then only after pressure from the United Nations. The Tuareg people of northern Africa freed their black slaves later in the same decade.

In view of the history of African slavery, why is it that The Nation of Islam, and some African-Americans, condemn Jews in particular, and not the Arab Islamic people, whose very religion sanctions slavery, and who continued the practice long after others had stopped? How does The Nation of Islam rationalize this attack on Jews, many of whom have fought consistently to see that justice and equality are not denied to American blacks?

If slavery is truly the motivating factor behind The Nation of Islam's attack on Jews, an honest and thorough review of all people and nations involved in the trade should be made before assigning blame to any one group.

Nicholas Alemanne
Gainesville, Fla.

Winthrop D. Jordan replies:

My comments on *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* focused on what the book itself said about the past, not the present. I deliberately avoided treating it as a contemporary political tract—which surely it is. There are dangers in regarding such a book as evidence of our present situation, dangers that become clear when efforts are made to balance the Atlantic slave trade somehow with the slave trade conducted on the east coast of Africa by Islamic peoples. The book did not discuss that latter trade. In my opinion, such blaming does not help our understanding of the past and most certainly does not open a gateway from present difficulties. Calls for considering

the wider context of the book are perhaps justified, but that context has an almost infinitely expanding quality. Once begun, the inquiries spill rapidly into such arenas as ancient Greece, medieval Korea, and present-day California. As for dealing with *The Secret Relationship* as a work of scholarship, I thought it important to do so because the book was and is being presented as such to some of our young.

Lincoln and Abortion

George McKenna quoted me in his article "On Abortion: A Lincolnian Position" (September *Atlantic*). He wrote:

[Abortion's] warmest supporters do not like to call it by its name. . . . Abortion clinics are "reproductive health clinics." . . . In an op-ed piece that appeared in *The New York Times* shortly after a gunman killed some employees and wounded others at two Brookline, Massachusetts, abortion clinics, a counselor at one of the clinics complained that the media kept referring to her workplace as an abortion clinic. "I hate that term," she declared.

I do hate the term "abortion clinic." I am not afraid of the word "abortion" or of the act of performing abortions. I object to the term "abortion clinic" because it is reductive and inadequate. Either McKenna did not read my piece carefully or he chose to quote me out of context. Because McKenna so earnestly exhorts us to "start talking with one another honestly," I'd like to give him another chance to see my words in their proper context:

Over and over, the news media and protesters call this place an abortion clinic. I hate that term. We do much more than provide abortions. We screen women for cervical cancer. We treat them for sexually transmitted infections. *We connect women who want to continue their pregnancies with the services they need. We help women prevent pregnancies they do not want* [emphasis added]. We help them plan when and whether they will become parents.

McKenna picked me out as an example of squeamish "pro-choicers, who simply refuse to face up to what abortion is." He picked wrong. I can say from personal experience and from my contact with

hundreds of women that having an abortion is hard. Like nearly all of the women I have counseled, I am acutely aware that having an abortion means stilling a heartbeat. About half of us have already borne a child. We consider very carefully the significance of our decisions. It is arrogant and callous to assume otherwise.

Louise Ambler Osborn
Charlestown, Mass.

George McKenna misunderstands the nature of the conflict he seeks to resolve when he says, "Here, then, is the center of it all. If abortion had nothing to do with the stilling of heartbeats and brains, there would be no abortion controversy." The abortion controversy is not chiefly about the unborn but is rather the most passionate battle in the ongoing power struggle between men and women. As such, it is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. For the present, however, I think the abortion-rightists hold the upper hand, and since they seek to block rather than to enact legislation, it is probable that they will continue to do so well into the next century.

Alexis A. Gilliland
Arlington, Va.

"Permit . . . discourage . . . restrict." Such confusing and inconsistent words were disturbingly prevalent in an article that strove to lend a clarity of purpose to the abortion debate. I found them of little help. One phrase in George McKenna's article did keep coming back to me, however. "When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs *another* man . . . that is despotism." Using a Congress that is more than 80 percent male as a platform for debate on abortion seems to me one of the more stunning examples of precisely the brand of despotism that Lincoln warned us of. For, despite a mutual vested interest in keeping our species chugging along, it is and always has been women who are forced to endure the physical and emotional burden of pregnancy. Whatever the outcome, the deck has been stacked against women on this one, and it is chilling that McKenna did not even care to mention that fact in his description of the historical politics of "choice."

Matthew Scanlon
New York, N.Y.

George McKenna replies:

I hope Louise Osborn will forgive me for finding in her letter the same note of defensiveness that I found in her original op-ed article. Yes, she is saying, we do abortions, but we do other things, too—very good things.

Her letter does contain one notable advance in candor: her admission that abortion "means stilling a heartbeat." Yet in her article she called her clinic "a place of healing and care." The question, then, comes down to this: How can "stilling a heartbeat" be reconciled with "healing and care"? How can the bad thing be reconciled with the good things? Perhaps there is some way, though I doubt it. But one of the points I sought to make in my article is that this issue must be *debated*, not suppressed or hidden behind euphemisms and fine sentiments.

Matthew Scanlon and Alexis Gilliland would frame the abortion controversy, in Gilliland's words, as a "power struggle between men and women." This is nonsense. Public-opinion polls conducted since *Roe v. Wade*, in 1973, have consistently shown women to be more pro-life than men. In 1992, for example, a Gallup poll for *Life* magazine found that 52 percent of women thought abortion should be legal "never" or "in only a few specific circumstances." The leadership of the pro-life movement is composed primarily of women, and the leaders of the original American feminist movement (in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) were outspoken in their opposition to abortion.

Advice & Consent

Your October issue carried an advertisement by an organization that calls itself FLAME—so-called Facts and Logic About the Middle East. These advertisements are outrageously racist and full of malicious disinformation. If you were remotely familiar with FLAME, you would know that it engages in a propaganda assault on all Arabs, regardless of their religion or nationality, for the purpose of evoking unconditional support of Israel, regardless of Israeli practices and actions.

FLAME's ads seek to portray a tiny, defenseless Israel surrounded by murderous, fanatical "Moslem-Arab" terrorists.

Of course there is no mention of the fact that Israel, which is an undeclared nuclear state, has been occupying Palestinian land, Syria's Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon for decades. There is no mention of the fact that to this day Israel continues to confiscate Palestinian land, demolish Palestinian homes, violate Palestinian human rights (including the right to self-determination), engage in collective punishment of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese civilians, build settlements on Arab land, and jail political prisoners who have never been tried in a court of law.

FLAME's blatant racism is evident in ads that blame "Arab-Moslem fanaticism" for all the problems of the Middle East. FLAME's intent is to equate all Arabs with Islam and, in turn, to equate Islam with terrorism, even though many Arabs are Christian or Jewish, and even though Islam does not promote terrorism any more than Christianity or Judaism does. FLAME's racist anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda is appalling.

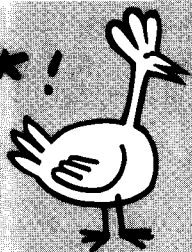
It is a disgrace that a respectable magazine like *The Atlantic Monthly* would agree to carry such inflammatory and racist messages! Would you publish an advertisement by the KKK? I think not. And rightfully so! It is unimaginable that your magazine would carry ads by groups who promote anti-black or anti-Jewish sentiments. Arabs, like Jews, are a Semitic people. Why is anti-Semitism tolerated when it is directed at them? By carrying FLAME's ads, you are compromising the integrity of your magazine. Arabs are not fair game for bigotry, lies, and hateful messages.

Hamzi K. Moghrabi
*American-Arab Anti-Discrimination
Committee
Washington, D.C.*

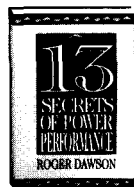
The editors reply:

FLAME's advertisements present a clear political position, but they are not racist, and we would not publish them if they were. *The Atlantic Monthly* does not for political reasons censor or "correct" advertising that appears in the magazine, nor does it necessarily endorse what any advertisement says. The Atlantic Monthly Company believes in free speech. We accept advertising from FLAME just as we would accept advertising from a group opposed to FLAME.

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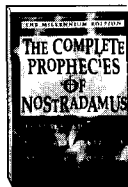
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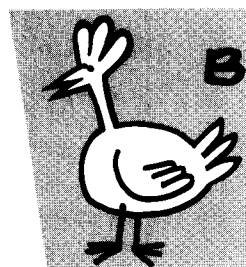
*43-8760. Boyhood in rural Mississippi in the 1940s.
Hardcover: \$15
QPB: \$9.95



*13-8829. Newly updated classic of earth-shattering predictions.
Hardcover: \$20
QPB: \$13.95



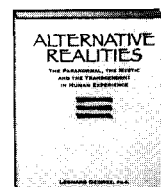
93-8154. Self-deception and a mysterious disappearance by the National Book Award winner.
QPB: \$9.95



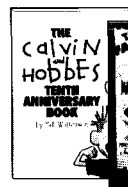
BOOK! BOOK!
BOOK! BOOK!



*93-8595. A practical guide to French words and phrases we hear and read every day.
Hardcover: \$18.95
QPB: \$12.95



23-8582. A guide to every reported type of unusual experience, from psychokinesis to UFO abductions.
QPB: \$14.95



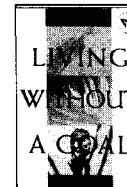
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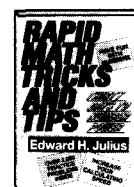
*33-8671. Explores the pitfalls of setting and meeting goals.
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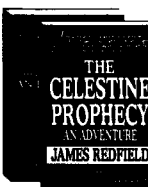
*87-1826. This reference provides alternative remedies for over 300 ailments.
Hardcover: \$23
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33-9109. This QPB one-volume edition collects two exciting novels based on the series.
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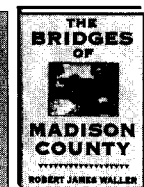
73-8698
(2 vols.)
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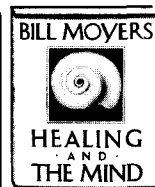
64-1378
QPB: \$13.95



43-9159
QPB: \$10.95



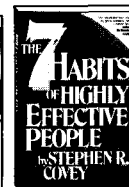
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QPB: \$15.95



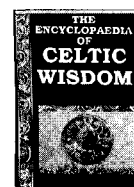
33-9118
QPB: \$14.95



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QPB: \$7.95



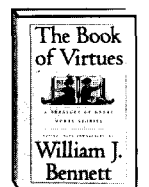
43-8488
QPB: \$12.95



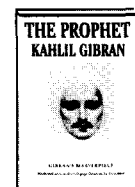
*93-8740
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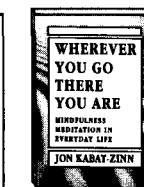
23-9092
QPB: \$10.95



*17-1780
Hardcover: \$30
QPB: \$11.95



23-8701
QPB: \$10.95



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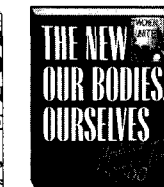
*37-1782
Hardcover: \$29.95
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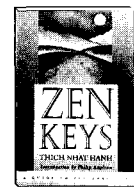
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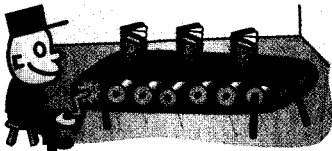
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THE JANUARY ALMANAC

Health & Safety

January 1, standards requiring abortion training in obstetrics-and-gynecology residency programs come into effect today. The requirements—issued by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education—are the first to mention abortion rather than simply “family planning.” There are alternatives: the ACGME will allow residents and institutions opposed to abortion to learn and teach only the management of abortion-related complications, provided that interested residents are allowed to train elsewhere in the practice of abortion. Programs that refuse to adopt the new standards could lose their accreditation. The proportion of OB-GYN residency programs that routinely provide first-trimester abortion training dropped to 12 percent in 1992—half of what it was in 1985.



Demographics

January begins the busy season for U.S. passport offices, and this year is expected to be particularly active, for two reasons. First, a record number of passports—those issued in 1985—expired last year. Second, the number of new passports issued has been growing, in large part because of a surge in the number of naturalization ceremonies. Officials estimate that 35 million U.S. passports are currently in circulation, and well over 5 million are likely to be issued or renewed this year. The government is introducing innovative technology to meet the demand: soon all passports issued domestically will use digitized photographs, a step that will also make it nearly impossible for criminals to forge passports.

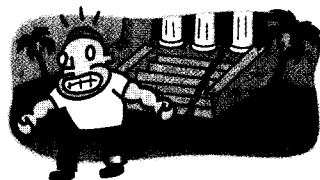


Food

January 1, starting today the European Union grants vintners in the Jerez region of southern Spain the exclusive right to call their wine “sherry.” The EU handed down this ruling in 1992 on the grounds that the term derives from a place-name: “sherry” (originally “sherris”) is a transliteration of Seris, the Arabic name for the Andalusian town now known as Jerez de la Frontera. Spanish sherry, a fortified white wine made mainly from Palomino Fino grapes and aged in oak casks, is battling a prissy image and has suffered on the world market in recent years. The new regulations should boost sales; impostor sherries made from grape concentrates, such as British ones (which have outsold Spanish sherries at Christmas-time), will have to be renamed. Enforcement of the law is likely to be difficult outside the EU: French producers of genuine champagne spend more than \$3 million each year to protect their name but have been unable to prevent some American companies from calling sparkling wines “champagne.”

Government

January 23, the first item from the Republicans' Contract With America to pass the House and Senate takes effect today. The Congressional Accountability Act removes the exemption from 11 workplace laws (including the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act



of 1964, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) which had applied to 23,000 congressional employees. The judiciary is now the only branch of the federal government that is not covered by these laws. Also this month, a new spouse-abuse law takes effect in California, replacing regulations that had made it possible for first-time misdemeanor offenders to avoid a trial or a guilty plea—and a criminal record—by successfully completing counseling. The new law requires defendants either to stand trial or to admit guilt; those convicted or pleading guilty will receive mandatory counseling that will not clear their records.



Environment

January 3, the U.S. Department of the Interior begins its annual mid-winter bald-eagle survey. Numbers should be up; the national bird's status was upgraded from “endangered” to “threatened” last year. For two weeks bald eagles will be counted in traditional wintering areas, which include the Chesapeake Bay, the upper Mississippi, and the Columbia River watershed. In danger of extinction a generation ago, bald eagles have made a remarkable comeback, thanks in large part to the 1972 ban on DDT and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The number of nesting pairs has reached about 4,500 (not counting those in Alaska, where bald eagles thrive), up from 417 only 30 years ago. Bald eagles occupy a shrinking natural habitat, however: people, too, enjoy perching at the water's edge. Naturalists note that the bird remains on the Endangered Species List—“threatened” simply means that the risk of extinction is less immediate.

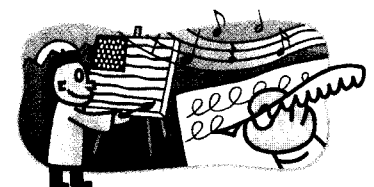


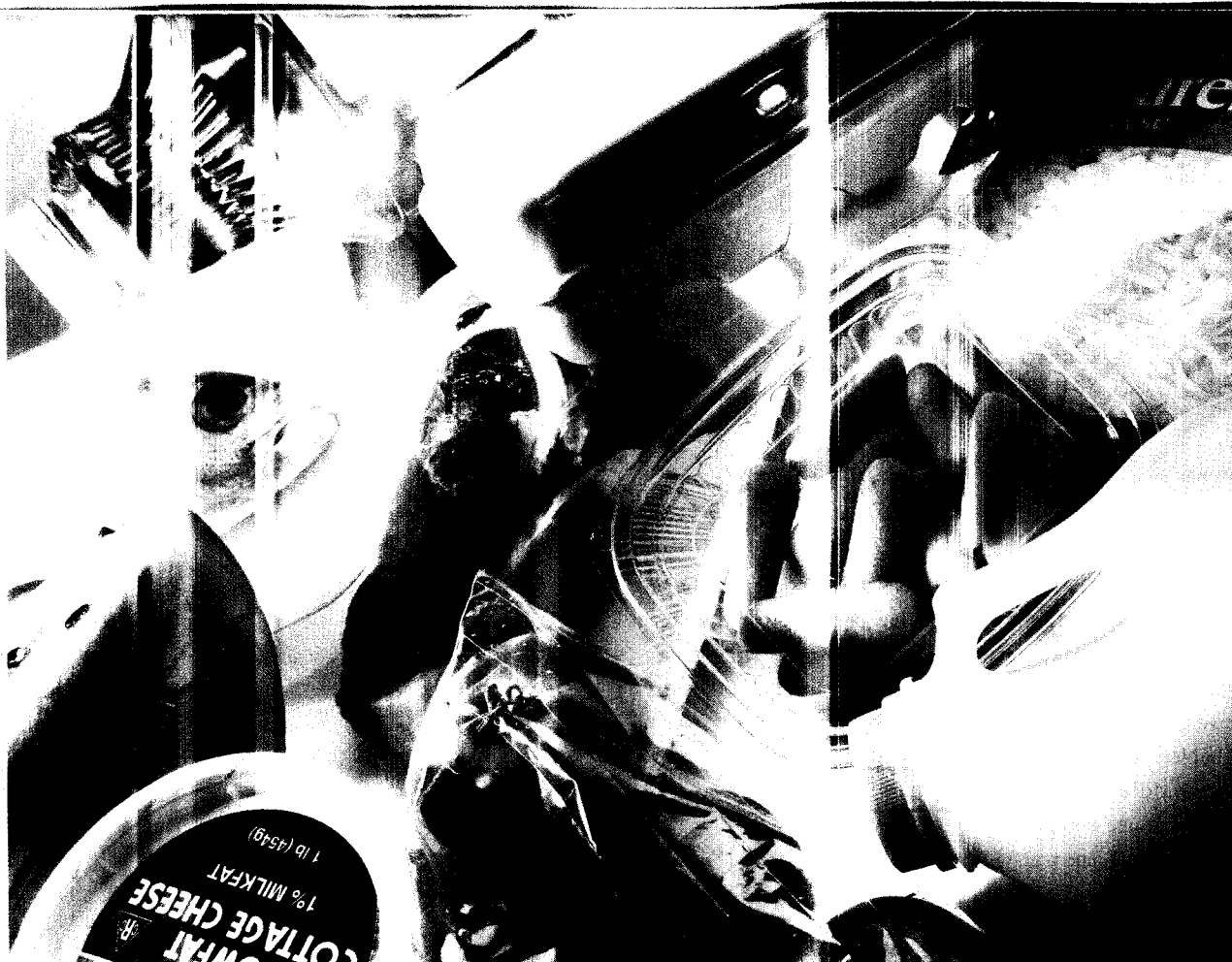
The Skies

January 4, the Quadrantid meteor shower, which is ordinarily a good display, is somewhat obscured even at its peak tonight by the gibbous Moon. 5, Full Moon, also known this month as the Wolf Moon and—among the Oto Sioux—the Little Young Bear Comes Down the Tree Moon. 18, in the predawn southeastern skies, the waning Moon passes close by Jupiter, which is visible all month long in the early morning. 22 and 23, the crescent Moon lies close to Venus and Saturn in the early evening.

75 Years Ago

Stuart P. Sherman, writing in the January, 1921, *Atlantic Monthly*: “Among builders of American civilization, many means are now discussed for awakening national pride and attaching the affections of the people to the state; conspicuous among them are, or were, Liberty Bonds, nationalization of the railroads, and universal military service. Robert Burns and Sir Walter did the work more simply and cheaply for Scotland. It has never been hard for the native-born American to hold America ‘first’ in political affairs; but musicians as such, painters as such, men of letters as such, cannot, without straining the meaning of the word, hold her first till her national genius expresses itself as adequately, as nobly, in music, painting, and literature, as it has, on the whole, in the great political crises.”





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A New Iron Curtain

NATO is incautiously expanding eastward, which has thoughtful Russians worried about being fenced out of Europe—and worse

THE planned expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization into Eastern Europe has been compared by one sour critic to the behavior of a couple in a crumbling marriage, who instead of going to a marriage counselor decide to try to save their relationship by having a baby, or possibly even several babies. NATO itself is in the middle of a very confused debate about its identity and role, and partly as a result it is difficult to detect any honest, coherent discussion in the West of the necessity for expansion and of how it will affect relations with Russia, the security of Ukraine and the Baltic States, and the peaceful integration of Ukraine into Europe. A potential diplomatic debacle is in the making. Fortunately, more and more voices are being raised in the United States against this policy.

The official Western line at present is that NATO expansion is meant to “strengthen European security,” but not against Russia or against feared Russian aggression. Nevertheless, a Russian official recently remarked to me on this score, “You must think we’re blind and deaf.” All public discussion in Poland, and much of it in the United States, on the part of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Robert Dole, and others, has been conducted in terms of the need to contain a presumed Russian threat and to prevent Russia from exerting influence on its neighbors—influence that is automatically viewed as illegitimate and threatening to the West.

Western protests that NATO has completely changed its nature since 1990 are met with Russian requests to be told exactly what, then, NATO is today—a question to which NATO itself simply does not know the answer. Western diplomats are unable to say what “security” in the context of, say, Poland actually means—and therefore unable to give any intelligible response when asked how it can be strengthened by NATO expansion.

The attitude of Boris Yeltsin’s government and the entire Rus-

sian political establishment to the expansion issue (after some wavering, above all on the part of Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev) is now strongly and unanimously negative, though the government hopes for the moment to continue exerting influence against expansion by cooperating with NATO—hence its

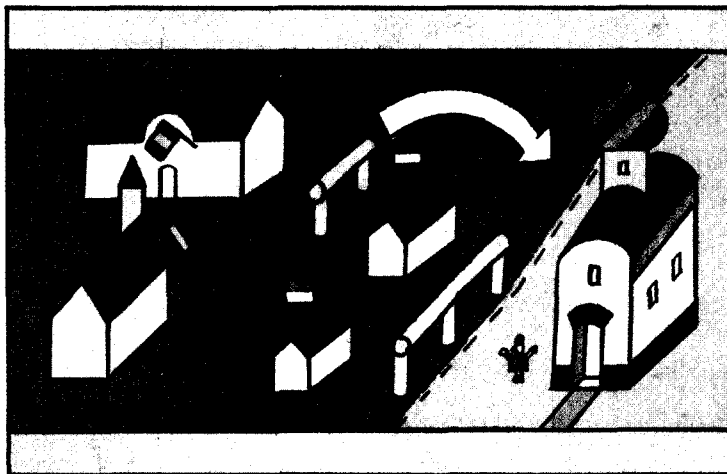
agreement to join the Partnership for Peace.

The reasons for Russian opposition are twofold: In the first place, NATO expansion is seen as a betrayal of clear though implicit promises made by the West in 1990–1991, and a sign that the West regards Russia not as an ally but as a defeated enemy. Russians point out that Moscow agreed to withdraw troops from the

former East Germany following unification after NATO promised not to station its troops there. Now NATO is planning to leapfrog over eastern Germany and end up 500 miles closer to Russia, in Poland. Western arguments that the 1990 promise to Mikhail Gorbachev referred only to East Germany, not to the rest of Eastern Europe, though strictly speaking correct, are not unnaturally viewed by Russians as purely jesuitical. Yeltsin’s officials say that NATO expansion would lead to a reversal of the previous pro-Western policy of the Yeltsin and Gorbachev governments, with serious domestic political consequences in the form of revanchist nationalism.

In the second place, Russians fear that NATO expansion will ultimately mean the inclusion of the Baltic States and Ukraine within NATO’s sphere of influence, if not in NATO itself—and thus the loss of any Russian influence over these states and the stationing of NATO troops within striking distance of the Russian heartland. Most Western diplomats privately say that these fears are paranoid, but the West’s inability publicly to rule out the possible future inclusion of any country in NATO makes it very difficult to reassure the Russians.

The overwhelming majority of Russian politicians, including



by Anatol Lieven



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most liberals, now believe it is necessary that most of the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States) be within a Russian sphere of influence. They see this not as imperialism but as a justifiable defense of Russian interests against a multiplicity of potential threats (radical Islam, future Turkish expansionism), of Russian populations outside Russia, and of areas in which Russia has long maintained a cultural presence—Ukraine, for example. This does not necessarily involve demands for hegemony over Russia's neighbors, but it certainly implies the exclusion of any other bloc's or superpower's military presence. In justification Russians point to the Monroe Doctrine and to the French sphere of influence in Africa. Most educated Russians now view Western criticism as mere hypocrisy masking Western aggrandizement. They point with anger to America's arming of Turkey in recent years, and to what are seen as recent attempts to expand U.S. influence in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, where arguments about strengthening local democracy or Western security can hardly apply.

For example, General Alexander Lebed, widely favored to win free elections for the presidency if these are held on schedule, in June of 1996, has publicly opposed the Russian military interventions in Tajikistan and Chechnya. He has also, however, spoken with extreme bitterness about NATO's expansion, even warning that this could lead to a third world war. Lebed told Reuters that NATO is behaving like "a big drunken hooligan in a kindergarten who says he will hit anyone he likes," and has said that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe would force Russia to form a new military bloc of its own and cancel treaties and military agreements with the West. He has also said, "The Cold War is over. They won, and we all agreed to this. So why have you decided to re-open the competition?"

Threatened Russian responses to NATO expansion range from an end to cooperation with the West should Poland become a member to bloodcurdling off-the-record

hints of destabilization and military action should membership look likely for Ukraine and the Baltic States. In the words of Vladimir Lukin, the chairman of the Duma Foreign Relations Committee and an ally of the liberal opposition leader Grigory Yavlinsky, "If NATO wants to expand to Eastern Europe, then first there must be a long process of international discussion, involving Russia, about what NATO is, and what the threats to security in the region really are and how they can be countered. But if NATO expansion were to aim at ultimate membership for the Baltic States and Ukraine, without Russia, that would be utterly unacceptable. No Russian could possibly accept the presence of a potentially hostile NATO within striking distance of Smolensk—or what were the sacrifices of the Second World War in aid of? I won't say how we should react to such a threat, because I am committed to friendship between Russia and the West. But I can tell you that the United States would find it a much more dangerous process than dropping bombs on the Bosnian Serbs."

Lukin and others have suggested that if NATO really does push forward against Russia, then Russia may have to retarget its nuclear weapons on the West, beginning with the restationing of tactical warheads in Kaliningrad. This may be the only practical way for Russia, given its

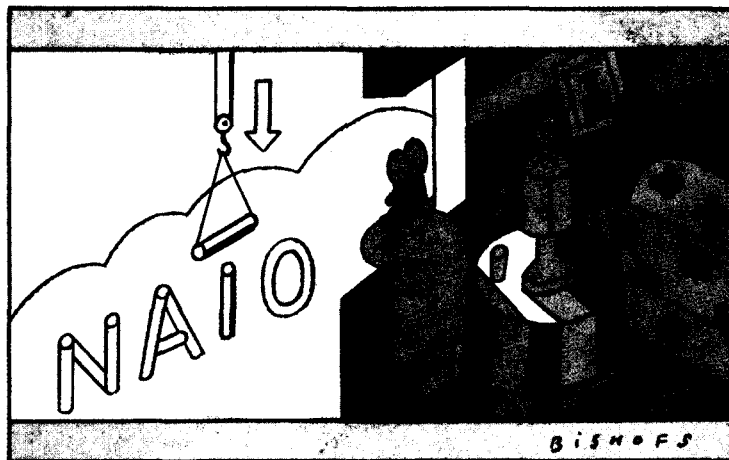
a likelihood is especially great in Germany, given the increasing role of the Greens in government there. It must be stressed, however, that Lukin and others speak of such a move only as the very last resort.

Lukin would probably define himself as a statist at heart, but radical Russian democrats also find NATO expansion deeply distressing, for reasons both of patriotism and of liberalism and "Westernization": excluding Russia from Europe and pushing it back toward Asia would increase Russia's "Asiatic" character in the spiritual as well as the geographical sense. By symbolically pushing Russia back to the status of Muscovy, as Russia was known before the reign of Peter the Great, NATO expansion could also deal a blow of historic importance to the whole effort, intermittent since the time of Peter, to reform Russia in a Western direction.

One normally sober, centrist, and pragmatic Russian foreign-policy adviser told me not long ago that in the event of a NATO move toward Ukraine, Russia would do its best to wreck the Ukrainian economy with an energy blockade, to rouse the Russian populations of Crimea and eastern Ukraine to revolt, and to subvert the Ukrainian armed forces, whose officer corps is still largely composed of ethnic Russians. Of course, this may well be hot air. Russia might not dare pursue such a

strategy, and if it did dare, it might well discover itself to be powerless—because Ukraine today is not nearly so weak or dissipated as it was a couple of years ago, and because most Russians in Ukraine would themselves probably resist such moves. All the same, it hardly seems rational for the West to increase the risk of such a crisis without some very pressing reasons.

The no longer current belief in the West that Russia would not oppose expansion came largely from the false impression of Russia's interests that was given by Andrei Kozyrev and the democrats in the early 1990s, an impression the West was very foolish to take at face value. We should have looked instead at Kozyrev's political insignificance in the Moscow establishment and



military weakness, to put military pressure on the West; and if Western European populations were suddenly to find themselves once again under nuclear threat as a result of what could be portrayed as a reckless and aggressive U.S.-led policy, the result would probably be a first-class political crisis in the West, possibly destroying NATO from within. Such

NATO is planning to leapfrog over eastern Germany, thereby ending up 500 miles closer to Russia, in Poland.

at the way that any Russian establishment was sooner or later going to define permanent Russian national interests. Over the past eighteen months Kozyrev's tactics and statements have been largely dominated by the requirements of his own short-term political survival. (These tactics appear not to have worked; Yeltsin has been hinting that he will dismiss Kozyrev.)

NATO expansion raises two serious questions for the West, neither of which has been regularly addressed in the Western "debate" on the issue, despite the acres of newsprint devoted to the subject. The first: Is fear of Russian aggression justified? The second: Will NATO membership for Poland in particular make Russia's western neighbors, Ukraine and the Baltic States, more or less secure?

The answer to the first question is that, as every Western military attaché in Moscow with whom I have spoken agrees, a Russian military threat to Poland and Eastern Europe is for the foreseeable future inconceivable. The war in Chechnya has been squalid and brutal, but given what it has revealed about the state of the Russian army, and about most Russians' complete lack of desire to fight wars, it should actually allow us all to sleep more easily in our beds. Nor, given the transformation of the Eastern European economies and political systems, does Russia have the ability to bring serious nonmilitary pressure to bear on these states. Russia is therefore not an immediate threat to Eastern Europe—so why the urgency about NATO expansion?

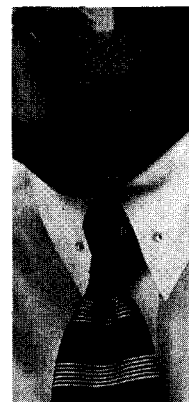
This brings us to the second question, for a potential Russian threat to Ukraine and the Baltic States obviously does exist. But as a Western ambassador to Moscow recently told me he had cabled to his government, "If Kiev is more secure, then Warsaw automatically be-

comes more secure, but this is not true the other way round." Thus NATO membership for Poland might radically lessen Ukraine's security, because Moscow, in a pre-emptive anti-NATO measure, would greatly increase pressure on Kiev to join a Russian-dominated military alliance. Western diplomats in Kiev are worried by this possibility.

So, too, are the Ukrainians, who fear that NATO membership for Poland would leave their country clearly designated as non-European. Recently President Leonid Kuchma has put a brave face on NATO expansion, now that it seems inevitable, but the worry remains. In the words of the distinguished Ukrainian-Canadian historian Bohdan Krawchenko, who has been training civil servants in Kiev for the past two years, "NATO should be very careful over expansion. Its advocates are raising all sorts of irrelevant points, when the only serious issue to be considered is that of the security of Ukraine and the Baltic States. NATO may make a disastrous decision—to draw a new iron curtain on the eastern frontier of Poland. That would be as much as to say that Europe stops at the Visegrad countries, and the rest of you can go to hell. . . . The problem is that Western Europe doesn't know what Europe is, and hasn't even thought seriously about what Europe should look like in twenty years' time. The West should be thinking about this and drawing up long-term strategies, not making short-term political decisions. The integration of the East Europeans into the West has to be an evolutionary process. Let it continue for a while before taking any new steps."

If Russia had already begun to put ruthless pressure on Ukraine and the Baltic States, then the West might be justified in going ahead with NATO expansion regardless; but no such pressure is currently being applied. On the contrary, Moscow has actively discouraged radical Russian separatism in the Crimea, and it has withdrawn its troops from the Baltic States, subsequently exerting neither military nor economic pressure on the Balts, despite deep anger at the policies of those states toward their Russian minorities. Moscow has been tough in its negotiations with Kiev over control of the Black Sea fleet and its base at Sevastopol, but without resorting to military pressure. According to all the Western military analysts I have spoken to, there has been no

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redeployment whatsoever of Russian forces so as to threaten Ukraine.

Russia today is both weaker and much more cautious than most people in the West realize. There are no indications at present that the Yeltsin government or any other rational Russian government that might come into being (excluding, that is, the likes of Zhirinovskiy and his adherents) would be willing to pay the immense economic and diplomatic costs of trying to bring Ukraine and the Balts to their knees. As for the Russian people, while they are certainly deeply nostalgic for the Soviet Union and great-power status, they are also deeply unwilling to sacrifice Russian lives and money to restore that status. This is shown by the widespread unpopularity of the military operations in Chechnya and Tajikistan—something that should give pause to those in the West who talk about Russians' being "naturally imperialist." The French, for example, fought infinitely harder in defense of their colonial empire, from the 1940s to the 1960s, than the Russians have done.

Apart from Chechnya and Tajikistan, Russian military pressure on the republics to submit to Russian hegemony, though often cynical and ruthless, has been exercised through local intermediaries (Abkhaz, Ossetes, Armenians, Transdnistrians), and has therefore been both veiled and limited in scope. As for the intervention in Chechnya, the whole affair has been morally vile, but this republic is, after all, internationally recognized as part of the Russian Federation, and the Russian government hesitated for more than three years before finally invading, in the face of immense provocation from Dzhokhar Dudayev, the President of Chechnya. Western governments over the past generation or so would have shown less restraint. What has happened in Chechnya therefore does not necessar-

ily prefigure Russian policies beyond Russia's borders—especially since Russia has gotten such a bloody nose there.

Western diplomats in Moscow generally know all this—though I detect an alarming tendency among the more opportunistic and cowardly of them to suppress this knowledge in the face of the prevailing wind blowing from their chancelleries at home, and among those chancelleries simply to ignore or censor advice from their Moscow embassies when it runs counter to the new Western consensus.

One problem is that in the West the public discussion, insofar as it exists at all, is taking place in an atmosphere of op-ed pieces highly colored by Cold War attitudes, Russophobia, ignorance of the region, fundamental indifference to the fate of the Balts and the Ukrainians, and a hypocritical refusal to set Russia's present experience in a general context of European decolonization and neo-colonialism—at which point it becomes clear that brutal defense of an existing sphere of influence does not necessarily make a country a threat to the rest of the world.

■ ■ ■

The global threat from the Soviet Union came from a mixture of that state's implacable anti-Western ideology, communism's claim to universal truth and applicability, and the immensely powerful Soviet armed forces. Russia today possesses none of these features, and Russian nationalism, while often dangerous and disgusting, poses no direct threat to anyone beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. Since Russia is thus not a security threat to Eastern Europe, and most Western analysts know this, the real but unacknowledged motives for NATO expansion have to be sought elsewhere. They appear to be fourfold.

- Within the United States the reason seems to be strongly connected to electoral politics, in the desire of both the Clinton Administration and its Republican opponents to appeal to the Polish and other ethnic lobbies, and in the desire of the Administration to be seen as taking a firm, tough, "dynamic" initiative in international affairs, so as to counteract a general impression of confusion and weakness. Among the Republicans, however, the wish for a stronger U.S. stand against China and Russia coincides with a growing unwillingness to supply foreign aid to regional states or to pursue nonmilitary

strategies of deterrence—an intellectually ludicrous and politically dangerous mixture, because it risks encouraging the Ukrainians, for example, to take up tougher positions vis-à-vis Moscow, only to find themselves abandoned by the United States should a crisis result.

- The Western Europeans are falling in line with this U.S. initiative above all out of fear that America will turn isolationist and withdraw from Europe—a fear strengthened by aspects of contemporary Republicanism and mutual irritations over Bosnia. In the (patronizing) words of one Western European diplomat, "We have to give the Americans some new toys to play with in NATO, because we're afraid that otherwise they may get bored and go home."

The Germans in particular have a curious mixture of attitudes: Liberal Germans are possessed by their old fear that unless Germany is anchored in NATO, and NATO is maintained by being expanded, German nationalists may be tempted once again to pursue the German *Sonderweg* ("separate path"). The nationalists, for their part, do see NATO expansion as a path to greater German influence in Europe, and to rolling back Russia, which they detest for having defeated and humiliated them in 1945. Both camps want a row of NATO buffer states between themselves and the unstable former Soviet Union, even at the risk of making that instability much worse. In neither case is it an ethical position.

- An additional Western European reason for agreeing to NATO expansion is an awareness of just how difficult it will be to expand the European Union, the other Western organization that the Eastern Europeans are passionately eager to join. Russia has no objections to EU expansion, because although it would clearly expand Western influence, it would also carry the possibility of major economic advantages for Russia. Thus the Russian government actually publicly welcomed Finland's entry into the EU.

But as far as the EU itself is concerned, full membership for the Eastern Europeans is the subject of an immense internal debate, at a time when Europe is nowhere near digesting or resolving the consequences of Maastricht or agreeing on its own future nature and identity. In particular, expansion to include Eastern Europe would mean a complete renegoti-

*NATO expansion is seen
as a betrayal of promises
and a sign that the
West regards Russia as
a defeated enemy.*

ation of the Common Agricultural Policy—an idea that makes European officials blench. From the point of view of, say, French officials, Russian anger pales into insignificance when compared with the fury of French farmers, who can really make them suffer—or so they think. But clearly the West has to do something to honor all those promises to the Eastern Europeans—so why not expand NATO?

• Finally, there is the sheer force of bureaucratic inertia and interest politics. NATO is an immense international military-bureaucratic organization that also directly and indirectly feeds huge numbers of intellectuals, journalists, and analysts. Consciously or unconsciously, all these people have a strong interest in keeping their jobs by finding a new and continuing role for NATO; and if they can't agree on such a role, then expansion will have to serve as a substitute. The intellectually lazy and cowardly among them also find it easier to recycle Cold War images of the Russian threat than to try to make sense of a new and confusing multipolar world—in which, for example, one really ought to know some foreign languages.

All these factors together add up to immensely powerful political reasons for NATO expansion—but reasons that are utterly feeble in terms of the real interests both of the West and of Russia's neighbors.

The risk now exists that relations with Russia are about to enter an ever-faster downward spiral. In the context of the Russian parliamentary elections due at this writing to be held in December and of the presidential election scheduled for June, anti-Western rhetoric is bound to increase. The same will be true, to a lesser extent, of anti-Russian rhetoric in the United States in the period before the presidential elections. Harsh Russian statements may lead to speeded-up NATO expansion; the Russian response will then become even harsher; and so on. The potential consequences of this range from the serious to the disastrous. (If the Russian presidential elections are canceled, or if Yeltsin dies before then and there is an attempt to create some sort of dilapidated Yeltsinite autocracy, then

the implications for Russian foreign policy will not be so clear.)

For the moment Western readiness to renegotiate the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty so as to accommodate Russia's new post-Soviet strategic position has helped to prevent a complete breakdown. So, too, has the fact that NATO has made it clear that the process of accepting the new members will take several years.



For the future, however, it is still the case that Russian officials and analysts threaten a general collapse of cooperation and deliberate Russian attempts to sabotage Western interests elsewhere in the world in the event of a rapid NATO expansion to Eastern Europe without some considerable compensation for Russia. For example, at present the standing orders to Russian diplomats at the United Nations are to cooperate with the West except when this is seen as clearly against Russia's interests. Those orders could be changed, and the UN returned to its position of Cold War paralysis. This might not worry those Republicans who in any case loathe the UN, but it ought to worry every Westerner who is aware of how frequently the UN has served the West's interests since 1990.

In the new, unpredictable multipolar world, and given the potential danger from China over the next few years, Western policy toward Russia should in my view be devoted to keeping options open, and keeping an eye on the West's possible future need of Russia as an ally—since Western and Russian interests still actually coincide in several vital parts of the world. This policy should be abandoned only if a Russian government demonstrates clearly aggressive intentions to-

ward its western neighbors—which is not at present the case. And as Bohdan Krawchenko has stressed, this is no moment—just as economic reform in Ukraine is beginning to gather speed—to be risking Ukraine's progress toward the West, by drawing new borders that exclude it.

If NATO expansion is slowed to take account of Russia's objections, and if Russia tones down those objections so as

not to strain its relations with the West, the reason is indeed likely to be China. Both Russian and Western policymakers are increasingly aware that it would be very foolish for either Russia or the West to allow the issue of NATO expansion in Europe to wreck the chances of future cooperation in the Far East at a time when China's future is looking so uncertain, and when so many

potential Chinese threats to Far Eastern security and even territory exist.

Russian policy therefore remains to try to influence NATO by cooperating with it—hence the decision to join the Partnership for Peace. An additional reason for this policy is that although the anger of Russian diplomats over NATO behavior is unfeigned, more serious and less paranoid Russians do of course realize that NATO represents no threat of direct attack on Russia. Indeed, the Western alliance's display of weakness, cowardice, and internal divisions over Bosnia has diminished Russian fears of NATO as an organization.

There remains, therefore, a good chance that over the next few years NATO expansion, and the Russian response to it, will be finessed so as to reduce any damage to NATO-Russian relations and any threat of greater instability in the former Soviet Union. Alternatively, that expansion will be delayed until the emergence of new global issues makes the whole question seem unimportant to both Russia and the West. There is also, however, a real danger that under a new, more nationalist Russian government, and a more hard-line Republican Administration in the United States, disputes over the issue would veer out of control, with consequences that cannot be foreseen. ☼



The Rancher Subsidy

The West's fabled ranchers are in trouble. The damage done to the land by cattle has become a contentious environmental issue. The ranchers' greatest enemy, though, is the free market

WHEN I first called to arrange a visit to his ranch, in the high desert country of central Oregon, Tom Campbell, a wiry man of sixty-eight, was hesitant. "I'm like a cigarette butt," he said. "Not a hell of a lot left." Campbell's remark was at least half in jest; several neighboring younger ranchers say they'd think twice about tangling with this man. But it's an apt description of the future of

by Todd Oppenheimer

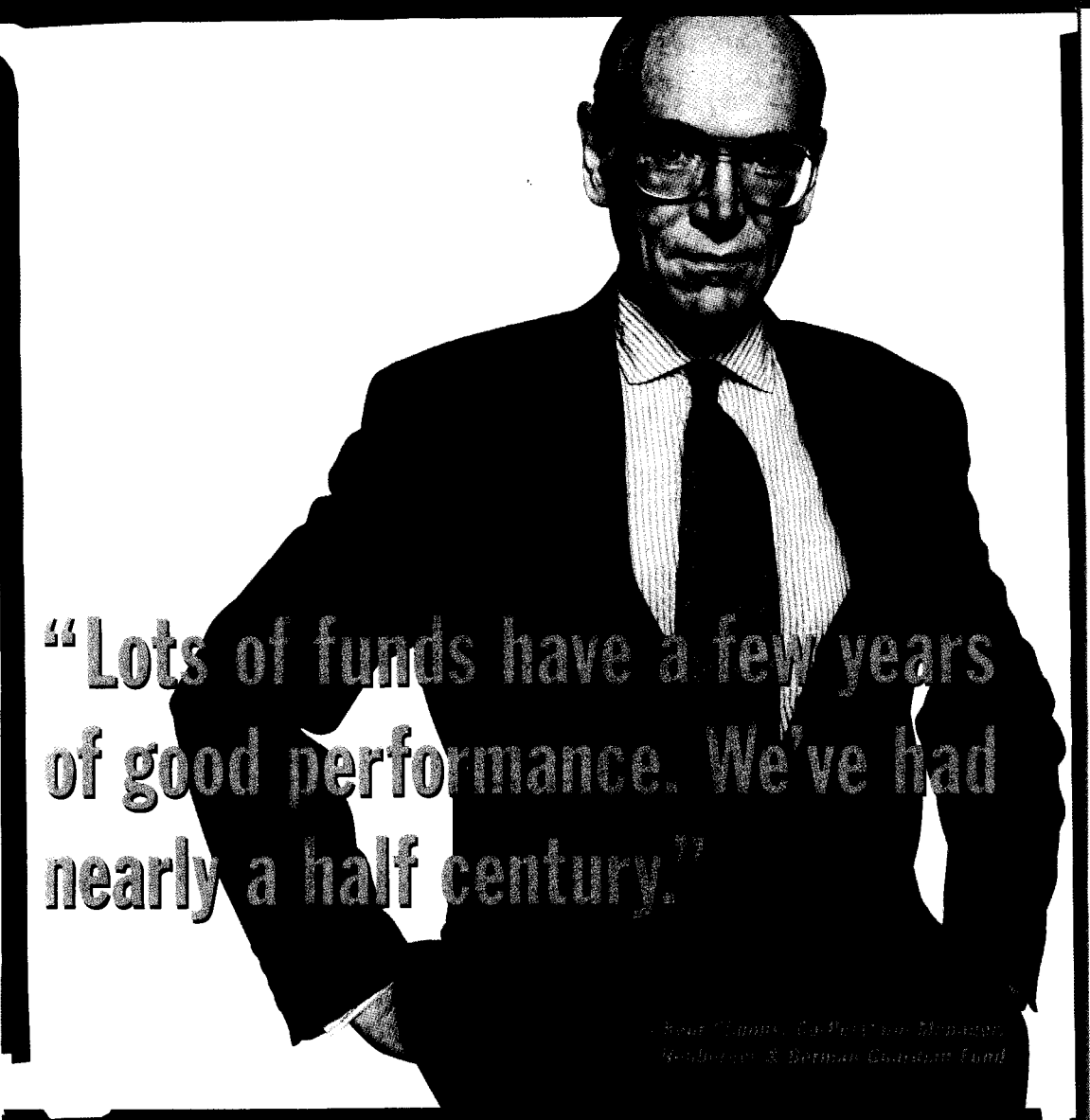
his territory. Once the symbol of America, the land of possibility, today's cowboy country is sorry stuff—fenced in, bereft of water, often grazed and trampled to dusty hardpan, challenged at almost every fence line by environmentalists grumbling about disappearing wildlife.

Such troubles provoke continual hand-wringing about the rancher's imminent demise. The truth is that ranchers won't

be disappearing anytime soon. Even in the post-industrial age the ranching community still possesses significant resources—vast quantities of land, and the leading role in America's self-image as tough and pioneering. When these assets are combined, they create tremendous political pull. As proof, look what happened to the Clinton Administration's efforts, two years in a row, to raise the fees the government charges for grazing on federal lands, virtually all of which lie in the eleven continental states west of Texas, making up a third of that territory. Ranchers who use federal land have long paid less than a third of the average private-land rate, and the increase proposed by the Administration was slight. Perhaps surprisingly, the group receiving this favor has always been a relatively small player in the nation's beef industry: the eleven western states produce less than a fifth of the nation's beef. Even so, western ranching interests beat the Clinton team handily. No one now wants to fight another losing battle with the rancher. Maybe he simply needs another set of survival methods—ones better for both the ranching community and the public at large.

Tom Campbell's ranch sits in the heart of the John Day River Basin, a 536-mile river network that constitutes one of the longest undammed systems in the country. Fishery experts consider the John





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Day critical spawning grounds for the Pacific Coast's wild salmon, a fish that is central to the identity of this part of the country and whose decline throughout the Northwest has been making local headlines since the 1970s. Salmon pose a challenge that previous species in trouble never have—first because northwest-

Cattle aren't native to the West—they come from Europe, where a more resilient landscape accustomed them to a sedentary grazing style, earning them the nickname "vacuum feeders."



erners care about them so passionately, and second because solving the salmon's problems requires the most drastic and

complex changes that ranchers have faced in decades.

Dams are the biggest bullies in salmon streams. (Often when dams were created, builders included cement fish "ladders" to help salmon swim upstream from the ocean during spawning season; strangely, they rarely put screens on the other side, which would have kept young fish traveling back to the sea from being chewed up in the turbines like hamburger.) However, now that salmon are in peril, experts are scrutinizing every cause they can find. These include logging, overfishing, ravenous seals and sea lions, water pollution, and, finally, cattle tromping through upland spawning streams.

Campbell would be happy to help migrating salmon if he could find an economical way to do it. Unfortunately, being rough on rangeland streams is embedded in a rancher's standard routine. Consider the conditions on Campbell's ranch in an

exceptionally wet year—1993, which saw the end of seven years of drought. One day that year in late summer, when the range has normally turned dry and yellow, many fields around the John Day were a thick green, and the John Day's North Fork, which borders Campbell's property, ran full and wide. On the far side of the river, where no cattle graze, the stream bed was in robust health—lined with overhanging banks where fish hide, and shaded by willows and other shrubbery, which keep the river cool and attract the insects fish eat. The near side, along Campbell's pastureland, provided a different picture. This shore had been grazed each year for decades, and the banks had long since been trampled and eroded into wide, stony shallows.

THE problem here, and on most western rangeland streams, is the beef cow's table manners. Cattle aren't native to this country—they come from Europe, where a wetter, greener, and more resilient landscape than that prevailing in the West accustomed them to a sedentary grazing style, earning them the nickname "vacuum feeders." Their American descendants are especially rude. Heavily domesticated, safe from predators owing to the government's killing program, the American beef cow behaves like a spoiled houseguest, frequently hanging out along rangeland stream banks all day long. The West's native grazers—primarily elk, deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep—eat in a roving, less intensive manner. (Buffalo, which were quite rough on the land, ventured into only Montana and Wyoming of the eleven western states.)

By now the history and behavior of cattle have provoked an entire industry dedicated to kicking them off public lands in the West. "The livestock industry is the last wildlife-genocide program in the United States," says Bruce Apple, the director of an Oregon-based environmental organization appropriately called Rest the West. "All-out war is declared on a diversity of species every day to benefit a single industry."

To be fair, the crops ranchers raise for their cattle have actually been good for some wildlife species, particularly big game such as elk, deer, and antelope. It's some of the smaller inhabitants—birds, tortoises, and ferrets, to name a few—that cattle have decimated. Yet the acri-

mony in this war, and its costs and casualties to date, make one wonder whether the cowboy life has simply become obsolete. On an ideal planet cattle would be restricted to our green eastern states or returned to the greener continent from which they came, leaving the arid West to the animals that are native to it. But the interlopers are here now—about 45 million beef cattle roam some 870 million acres, more than two thirds of the land mass in our seventeen westernmost states. These animals live on roughly 200,000 cattle ranches. Many of the biggest are financially marginal sideline investments run by wealthy enterprises, including the Mormon Church, or by tycoons such as William Hewlett and David Packard, of the Hewlett-Packard Corporation. Most, however, are run by small ranching families whose primary asset is land the profitability of which is questionable—for running cattle or doing anything else.

One simple answer would be to fence cattle out of the streams—a step that Campbell has taken along the most vulnerable mile of his riverbank. But fencing every troubled stream won't work. The resulting labyrinth of barbed wire would be harmful to wildlife, troublesome to maintain, and costly. Good fencing can cost \$8,000 to \$12,000 a mile. And with every fence comes the cost of pumping and piping replacement water to thirsty cattle—and the bureaucratic trouble. Ironically, western-state water laws have traditionally encouraged ranchers to skip all this and walk their cattle directly into fragile streams.

IN search of solutions, I paid a visit to Clint Gray, a ranch manager known around the valley for unusually ecological approaches to ranching. The operation that Gray was running at the time (recently another ranch manager, George Hixson, took it over) is unusual—there are no huge ranch headquarters, no shops full of tractors and machinery, no stacks of hay. There are just a few scattered buildings, including an old wooden house with a sagging front porch, which sit in a small green basin high above the main valley.

Gray first appeared on the doorstep of the ranch owner, Jim Bentley, one November day seventeen years ago, frozen out of a nearby gold-mining camp and

(Continued on page 36)



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BY AUSTIN BAER AND NANCY DALVA



MAN BEHIND THE MOVES

Remember the mad waiter in *She Loves Me*, zigzagging among oblivious couples? Remember the Washington Senators in *Damn Yankees*, rocketing every which way around the diamond and still dropping the ball? Broadway has seen some knockout dance numbers lately, and the man responsible for lots of them is the unsung Rob Marshall. His signature? Not an angled elbow here or a snazzy floor pattern there but a Keatonesque trust in gesture, a Tharpian taste for asymmetry, a Birdlike joy in flights of anarchy against pattern. On Broadway his work is currently enhancing the sharp Roundabout revival of Sondheim's dull cult favorite *Company* (great songs, lousy book) and the gender-bending Julie Andrews extravaganza *Victor/Victoria*. At the same time, national touring companies of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (starring Chita Rivera) and the choreographer's chef d'oeuvre *Damn Yankees* (starring Jerry Lewis) are spreading Marshallmania coast to coast. (See local listings.) —A.B.

"The best in this kind are but shadows," Theseus says in the last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them." By "this kind" Theseus means actors. Happily, when a great many Americans next hear the line, the speaker should not need them to be so forgiving: Alex Jennings, making his American debut in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the Bard's imperishable comedy, recently impressed the finicky *New Yorker* as being "the prime joy of London theatregoing." And if the past is any guide, this traveling *Dream* could define an era. A quarter century ago



Rousing from a dream

another RSC *Dream* toured the world. Directed by Peter Brook, it unfolded under unvaryingly bright light in a white box of a set that recalled the title of Brook's seminal treatise *The Empty Space*. The new version, staged by Adrian Noble, the RSC's current artistic director, deploys lots of light and dark, a bold palette of primary colors, and a witty, postmodern passel of props. Well, fashions come and go. What shouldn't have changed since Brook's production is the exuberance of the actors. Beginning in January, *Dream* plays San Francisco, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., prior to a Broadway opening in March. —A.B.

TAYLOR, TAYLOR, BURNING BRIGHT

Paul Taylor is the most Blakean of choreographers. On one wonderful program during his company's fall season in New York one could see his *Roses* (1985), *Company B* (1991), and *Esplanade* (1975). There it was—the whole antithetical Taylor scheme, burnished, glowing, full of delight and regret, hope and loss. Taylor's most romantic dances look increasingly like reveries, but then his work has always had a dreamlike quality and logic. As



A scene from the varied repertory

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Musical meter seems to function for the choreographer Mark Morris the way metrical forms function for poets: in every case the music is the given. His taste in music is wide-ranging—the Mark Morris Dance Group's current repertory includes dances set to Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Dvořák, Ibert, Stephen Foster, and Lou Harrison. His taste in movement is equally broad—ballet, modern, folk, Indian, flamenco, country, fencing. You name it, Morris has embraced it.

This choreographic statement of inclusion—the Morris philosophy—is also expressed through his community of dancers, both in

their persons and in their interactions. Within the Morris troupe there is a diversity of color and of sexuality, with both sexes running the gamut from sinuous to sturdy. Soloists step out of the group only to return to it. Nonetheless, each dancer remains distinct, and distinctive—none more so than the choreographer, who is on tour this month with his company in Florida (at the Gusman Center for Performing Arts, in Miami, January 12; the Florida Theatre, in Jacksonville, January 14; and the Duncan Theatre, in Palm Beach, January 16) and in Pennsylvania (at the Benedum Center, in Pittsburgh, January 20). —N.D.



if to correct a tendency toward gloom, the choreographer just introduced *Offenbach Overtures*, a funny, Gallic frolic. The Paul Taylor Dance Company is performing this and the rest of the repertory at a peak, offering a whole roster of first-among-equal performers, each devoted to ensemble yet fully capable of filling the stage solo. They are perhaps the most inviting of dancers, continually enticing one into Taylor's world. Traveling there—out of oneself and into the dance—is a rich voyage. This month finds the company in Minneapolis (January 19, Northrop Auditorium), Princeton (January 22, McCarter Theater), and Frankfurt, Germany. Then they will crisscross the country throughout the spring. —N.D.

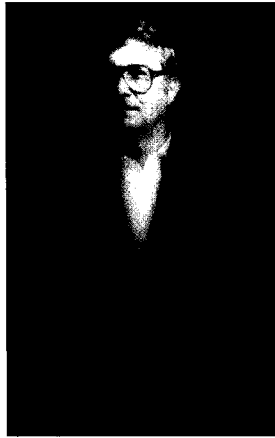
Austin Baer is a writer based in New York. Nancy Dalva is a contributor to *Dance Ink* and other publications.

Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

LOOKING FOR A SOUL TO STEAL

With any luck, the next important rock musical on Broadway will be Randy Newman's *Faust*. Having completed a trial run in California, it should arrive in New York within the year, although nothing is definitely scheduled. In the meantime, you can hear the album (Reprise) and laugh at some of the most twisted theology this side of... oh, say, your friendly neighborhood cult. But unlike your friendly neighborhood cult, Newman has a theology that is meant to be twisted and funny, and it succeeds. An ardent atheist with a breathtaking command of most of the important American musical genres, Newman sings the part of the Devil in this retelling of Goethe. You get the impression that he



Lucifer himself

strongly identifies with this angel who is thrown out of heaven for getting drunk at a party and telling God that He's a figment of the human imagination. God—sung by James Taylor as a successful but dull white guy—and the Devil subsequently make a bet on whether the latter can tempt Henry (sung by Don Henley), a student at Notre Dame who is so lacking in curiosity that he doesn't even read the Devil's contract before signing it. You'll have to buy the CD to get the rest of the plot. America's wittiest songwriter, Newman has always written from the points of view of a marvelous array of comic characters. He was born to do a complete musical, and this is his masterpiece. —C.M.Y.

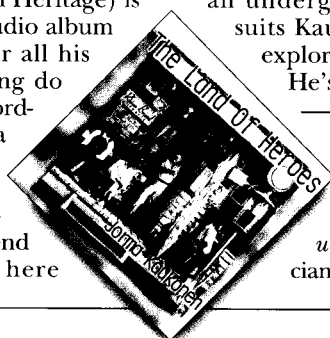
THIS LAND IS JORMA'S LAND

During his days with Jefferson Airplane, Jorma Kaukonen played the hottest electric guitar in San Francisco. But his first love was acoustic finger-style guitar, and his acoustic instrumental "Embryonic Journey" from that period has evolved into a staple for aspiring fingerstyle players. Kaukonen went on to found Hot Tuna, which balanced electric and acoustic approaches in mostly traditional music, and he has become a revered and highly effective guitar teacher on videotape and in person (his farm in Ohio will soon become a retreat for guitar students). *The Land of Heroes* (American Heritage) is Kaukonen's first solo studio album in eleven years, and for all his fans who've been making do with his various live recordings (some authorized, a lot bootlegged), it is welcome news indeed. Renowned for his interpretations of the Reverend Gary Davis, Kaukonen here



A long-awaited return

covers two more Davis songs, "Banks of the River" and "Have a Little More Faith in Jesus," both with delightful melodies—which Davis obscured on the originals with his ragged bellow (an acquired taste even for blues fans). Kaukonen's friendly vocals are immediately accessible, though capable of spiritual depth when called for. His guitar remains the main attraction. It sparkles on "Re-Enlistment Blues," originally sung by Merle Travis in the movie *From Here to Eternity*. It roars and snarls on "Dark Train," an electric blues instrumental. And it goes deep on "Follow the Drinking Gourd," an underground railway tune that suits Kaukonen's improvisational explorations. Watch for his tour. He's great live. —C.M.Y.

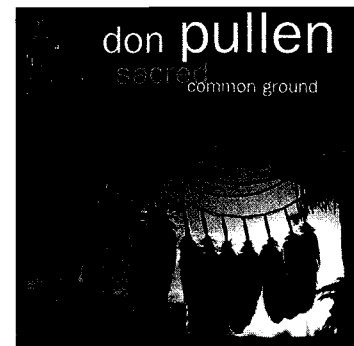


Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe and CD Review.

Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.

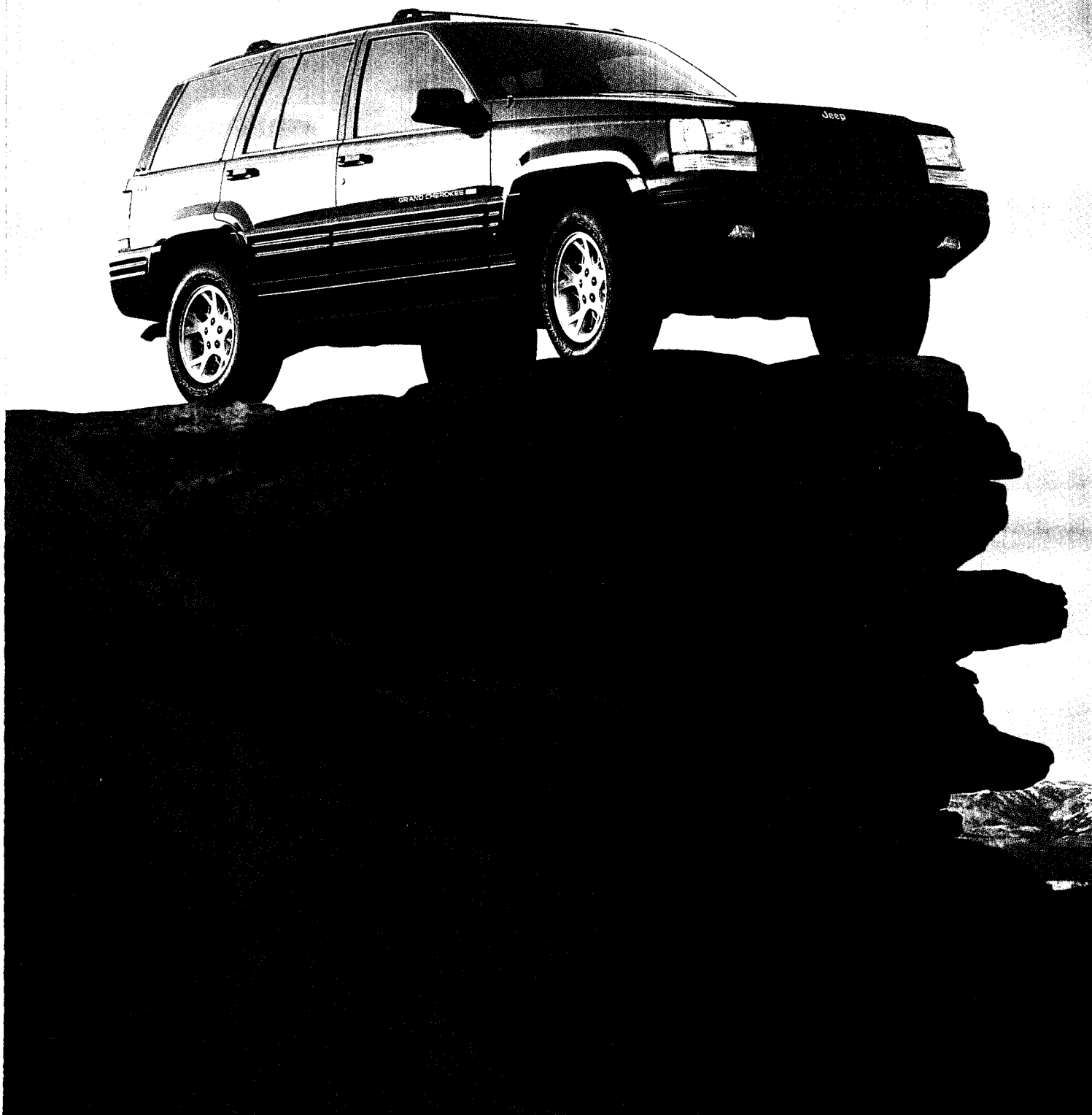
UNCOMMON CONNECTION

Don Pullen was a rarity in the jazz world of the past quarter century—a unique stylist comfortable in both the most traditional and the most exploratory settings. Best known for his bruising, volcanic piano textures, which he produced by swirling his knuckles and the backs of his hands across the keys, Pullen could also instill his music with the simple eloquence of spirituals and the roadhouse rock of the blues. He built a reputation for coherent cataclysm through work with Charles Mingus, co-leadership of an extroverted quartet with the saxophonist



George Adams, and creation of his own quintet, the African Brazilian Connection. The Connection's ability to merge disparate ethnic strains over an identifiable jazz base paved the way for his most ambitious work, *Sacred Common Ground* (Blue Note), originally conceived in 1993 and completed just six weeks before Pullen succumbed to lymphoma, last April.

This music, which puts the African Brazilian Connection together with seven singer-drummers from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of Montana, was designed to accompany a dance work by Garth Fagan, but it works powerfully on its own. The key is the sureness of composer Pullen's dramatic development. The Native American chants and instrumental interludes function separately at first; then they succumb to the power of J. T. Lewis's drum set and Mor Thiam's African percussion, and slowly boil into collective expression. Pianist Pullen provides further continuity with his most reflective playing. Without surrendering his iconoclastic flourishes, he remains sober and contemplative, ensuring that this uncommon meeting of musics will also serve as his heartfelt benediction. —B.B.



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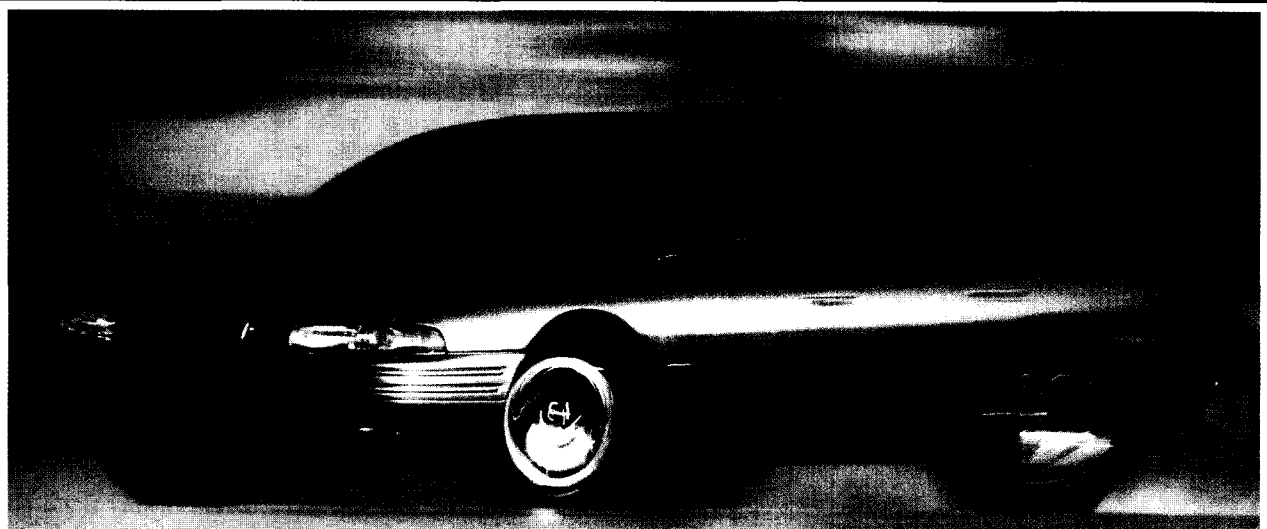
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Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

A PRIMER IN THE LESSONS OF LOVE

Molière bequeathed to posterity a *School for Wives* and a *School for Husbands*. Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart's greatest librettist, added a *School for Lovers*, better known by its alternate, sexist title *Così fan tutte* (*All Women Do the Same*). Unlike *Le nozze di Figaro* (which allows commentators to discuss the French Revolution) or *Don Giovanni* (a fine pretext for disquisitions on demonic Eros), the third and last of the Mozart-Da Ponte masterpieces comes with no ready-made list of discussion topics. On a bet with an old cynic, two young officers don disguises, each attempting to seduce the other's fiancée and succeeding, to his own dismay. Well, asks the cynic, pocketing his winnings, what did they expect? *Così fan tutte*. Many otherwise discerning critics (among them



Cecilia Bartoli

Beethoven) have thought the opera frivolous, but few works in any medium say more about the heart's unruly assaults on convention, about the speed with which passing fancy turns to enslavement (or about the humiliation of failing to distinguish between the two). *Così*'s celestially framed lessons for lovers come to both coasts in productions by the Metropolitan Opera (February 8-March 14; 212-362-6000); the Opera Company of Philadelphia (February 19-28; 215-928-2110); the Los Angeles Music Center Opera (February 27-March 13; 213-972-8001); and the Washington Opera (March 9-24; 202-416-7800). At the Met watch for the house debut of the Italian superstar Cecilia Bartoli as the duped ladies' enterprising chambermaid.

REMEMBRANCE OF OPERAS PAST

Mother lures doddering plutocrat into salon; daughter sings, tickles ivories... a typical matrimonial campaign. But in *Verlobung im Traum* (*Betrothal in a Dream*) the daughter's party piece is the aria "Casta Diva," if you please, from *Norma*—to the accompaniment of which mother and plutocrat give voice to their own, barely related concerns. To take Bellini's tranquil stream of rapt melody as one strand in a Dostoevskian trio of greed and folly... this takes nerve. The composer who had it was Hans Krása, born in Prague in 1899, and *Verlobung*, which had its premiere in 1933, is remarkable in other ways, too, pitting high Indian-summer romanticism against rough and rowdy honky-tonk. But Krása was a Jew, and the talent evident in this, his first opera, was no shield against the atrocities of his age. On October 16, 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz and heard from never again. Now his music is at last re-emerging. Two years ago the opera companies of Prague and



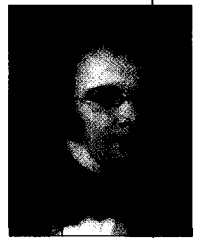
Cast members of *Brundibár*

Mannheim revived *Verlobung* in an acclaimed coproduction that has been picked up by the Washington Opera (January 6-February 10; 202-416-7800). In anticipation of the main stage event the company—in cooperation with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—last summer mounted an education-outreach project with higher moral ambitions than most: two free performances of Krása's children's opera *Brundibár* (*The Bumblebee*)—a title more familiar to historians of the Holocaust than to musicians. Written in 1938-1939 for the untrained voices of the children in Prague's Jewish orphanage, it was first performed, by them, on September 23, 1943, in the concentration camp at Terezin. The Washington cast consisted of twenty-eight schoolchildren aged eleven to sixteen from the capital and environs. A survivor from the original cast was on hand to applaud the performance.

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

UNHAPPY TRAILS

The German song literature knows no theme more pervasive than that of wandering, and nowhere is it sounded more hauntingly than in *Winterreise*. In two dozen songs running some seventy minutes, Schubert chronicles a rejected young lover's shattering winter journey into solitude and madness. The cycle is the lieder singer's *Hamlet*, dangerous and irresistible, performed incessantly yet rarely done justice to. Among recitalists active today, none finds the way into Schubert's infinite shades of despair more feelingly than the Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmair, whose lightness of timbre and beauty of tone lend the bitterness of the material an especially



Schubert

poignant edge. Philips, which has already issued Holzmair's hypnotic accounts of Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, releases his new *Winterreise* this month. A North American recital tour devoted to this work will follow in February (La Jolla, Vancouver, Fort Worth, New York, Toronto, Philadelphia, and Amherst, Massachusetts). Next, Holzmair touches down in Washington, D.C., as the goofy heart-breaker Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*: he is a most mercurial artist.

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Starting this month the winners of the Arts & Entertainment Challenge will be eligible to win a grand prize—I Got Rhythm: The Music of George Gershwin, the four-CD boxed set reviewed in our December issue. (See attached card for details.)

ANSWERS TO THE DECEMBER CHALLENGE:
1. JAN AND DEAN 2. E.S.P.

(Continued from page 28)

looking for a home. Bentley let him stay in a broken-down cabin at the far corner of what was then a 50,000-acre ranch, and Gray lived there alone for the next few months, spending many hours studying the patterns of the animals and the grasses out of ecological curiosity. Soon he was recruited for work on the ranch, but the imprint remained of his months of watching the wild range. Now, at fifty-two, he calls himself a "recovering hippie." About a decade ago, after Bentley was forced to reduce his herd because of unrelated business losses, Gray, by then the ranch manager, made his priority not beef production but preserving the health of his boss's land—and gradually discovered a highly effective method of running cattle. He was well suited to this role. His house feels like the backwoods cabins of his past; the walls, made of barn siding, are hung with spurs, branding irons, hay hooks, and a .30-30 rifle. Wood rasps sit next to the cereal bowls in the kitchen cabinet. Bookshelves are filled with titles like *The Organic Way to Plant Protection*, *Holistic Resource Management*, and *The Knowledge Value Revolution*.

All that remains of Bentley's old spread is 8,200 acres (now under new ownership). Cattle graze every corner of this property, apparently without hurting it. This is a rare feat, which Gray accomplished by employing three surprisingly simple rules: Graze each field to its predetermined limit. Move the cattle before the grass is overgrazed. Don't bring them back until the plants are fully recovered. (Hixson now follows a similar routine.)

The first morning of my visit Gray took me out to show me the network of healthy wild grasses that can result from following his rules. Just beyond his driveway we stopped at a plot of giant wild rye that stood six to eight feet tall. In tales about the homesteading days in this basin cowboys ride through grass reaching higher than their horses' shoulders. Almost nowhere can cowboys do that today, but Gray believes that there were once many fields of giant rye just like his. "Look at the function of this country on a planetary scale," he told me. "Everyone is familiar with the rain forests. If you said they were the lungs of the planet, people would relate to that. I look at the rangeland as the planet's skin. Its function is two things—water circulation and

soil production." The water circulation occurs through the network of topsoil and range grasses, which store and filter rainwater, letting it gradually seep toward the rivers and oceans. Soil is produced by erosion—and by the action of plants and microorganisms, such as rangeland mosses. A rock at our feet provided an illustration: it cradled several lumps of moss, and when we pried one loose, we found a small, damp pocket of sod, which the moss's acids had created out of the rock itself. "The issue is how far does all this move? Does it end up in the John Day River—or right here? The major player in that role is the giant rye. It's the one plant that can flat-out stop soil movement."

I soon had a chance to verify Gray's claims firsthand. That afternoon we were hit with a typical high-desert summer storm, which pounded us with thick sheets of rain and hail for more than an hour. Such downpours are notorious in this country—they're nicknamed "gully washers," because of their tendency to carve deep ravines where only a ditch existed hours before. This storm was no exception: gravel roads were cut to pieces, some got washed out, and most stream banks were ripped clean of new grasses. Once the storm had passed, Gray and I ventured out to repeat the morning's tour.

The air was spicy with the smell of sage, its leaf oils released by the beating of the hail. Just below the house a roadside gully full of soupy red-brown storm water had poured straight into Gray's stand of wild rye, carrying rocks the size of my fist. After a few gushy steps into the foliage we could see no further sign of rocks, or of mud. "Look at that," Gray said, smiling. "That soil didn't go ten feet!" (Later Wayne Elmore, a riparian specialist with the Bureau of Land Management, told me, "It's amazing how many people out here have never seen that. It never even dawns on them that that can happen.") Farther on we checked an old river gully. During our morning tour the gully had been dry but lined with rushes, because cattle hadn't grazed the area since early spring. When the storm brought its wash of mud, the rushes caught the whole load. Gray was thrilled. "This is going to give us several more inches of soil than was here a couple of hours ago," he said.

A hundred yards downhill, across a fence, the ravine continued onto a neighbor's property, where the soil was beat-

en into hardpan. The storm had shaved it cleaner still, leaving behind none of the water, topsoil, or promising seedlings that Gray had showed me. "It looks used, doesn't it?" the neighbor, Clyde Davidson, said to me later. "I have to use this grass. This is what I live on." Davidson's point was that Gray could afford

*At last count the
Bureau of Land
Management had never
visited half of the
most sensitive lands
under its care. The
record was even worse
at the Forest Service.*

to go easy on the land, because he was drawing income from outside sources. Gray acknowledges this fact. Half his income came from a tiny cottage industry he has run for years: producing "twig beads" out of exotic woods. Only \$20,000 a year, he says, came from the ranch.

Still, Gray believes that the average rancher can duplicate his efforts, outside income or not. In fact, his seasonal routine soon built up so much vegetation that the cattle could graze straight through most winters with only a little supplementary hay, which he and Bentley bought. That meant they didn't have to harvest hay anymore. Bentley sold his expensive haying equipment, thereby cutting equipment and maintenance expenses dramatically. The ranch needed less income, so Bentley never brought his herd back to its previous size. As a result, the land continued to regain strength. Gray eventually was able to run 300 pairs of mothers and calves, a comparatively healthy herd for 8,200 acres. In contrast, Clyde Davidson once ran only 200 pairs on a ranch of about



13,000 acres. Much of the reason is that Davidson does not regularly move his cattle. In range-management circles his is disparagingly called the Columbus method of ranching: Turn your cattle out in the spring and discover them in the fall.

GRAY'S scheme sounded so easy that I couldn't wait to return to Tom Campbell's ranch to see how much of it would work there. The next day Campbell and I drove across 45,000 acres, the swath of public and private land he ranches with four partners.

Like large parts of the West, this is rough terrain: rocky, deeply canyoned, chaotically spread out, much of it harsh and dry—not nearly as forgiving as the land that flourishes under Gray's rules. "That Cottonwood Ranch, it lays right," Campbell said, referring to the larger piece of Bentley's property as we jostled up the mountain in his four-wheel-drive truck. "There isn't a lot of north slopes frozen up. Even though some of it's steep, they have pretty good access to it. It's got county roads through it. If there's a problem, they can see it. They're not stuck off here five miles, where you'd have to ride your horses to get to it. You get some of these old cows out on the frozen hillsides in the winter, you can't hardly drive 'em off. They're scared to go downhill. I've fought whole bunches of cattle half a day to get 'em to go down a frozen-up trail. If you put the dogs to 'em, you'd kill half of 'em."

Campbell's point was that it's impossible for him and most western ranchers to graze cattle through the winter. So he must maintain haying equipment and grow hay—or buy it. The former owners of his land, he told me, once tried to "winter out" but failed. "The weather's so unpredictable. A cow that's gonna calve in the spring, she can go downhill to such a condition you can't stuff enough hay in her to get her back where she'll produce a good calf."

Passing judgment on the Tom Campbells of the world is tricky, because their relationship with the range is so mixed. Campbell clearly loves the land: as we tromped across one dry plateau, he stopped frequently to pick wildflowers, and kept the tiny bouquet clutched in his thick hand for an hour. But he also manages this land on a brutally thin margin. To keep costs down, he and his partners employ only one cowboy to circulate

900 pairs of mothers and calves through 45,000 acres. The effects of such thriftiness are visible. We finally found the main herd near a water trough, where they'd been for days. Grasses in the area were long gone, and the ground was trampled into thick black mud. Similar scenes can be found on ranches throughout the West. According to federal studies, 60 percent of the Bureau of Land Management's rangelands are missing at least half their native plants and grasses, and could fare even worse in the future.

There is yet another approach to ranching, which aspires to combine Tom Campbell's average-rancher constraints with Clint Gray's idealism. The technique, which has a devoted following, is called holistic resource management; it correctly assumes that most ranchers run cattle somewhat haphazardly—overusing some spots, underusing others. The goal in HRM is to search out and destroy every inefficiency, but with holistic ecological care. This goal might better define HRM as home-run management, because its practitioners can be seen constantly swinging for the fences. As one HRMer gave me a tour, proudly showing off his unusually ambitious routine, it became clear that so many tasks were falling through the cracks that the ranch was battling only about .250. One field contained a portable fence designed to move cattle frequently, but it was ineffective; after an hour or two the cows simply ambled back to overgraze their old ground. Over the hill a stream that has long been home to the salmon's cousin, the steelhead, was so beaten up that it looked like an erosion ditch. "There have been some tremendous failures using HRM," Wayne Elmore, the BLM's riparian specialist, told me. "People heard you can double your beef-production numbers. They didn't hear that you've got to watch your grass and be with your cows every day."

Even where federal land could easily be brought back to health by changes in method, the changes are discouraged by the inertia of federal policy. At last count the BLM, which oversees 163 million acres of rangeland, had never visited half of the most sensitive lands under its care. The record was even worse at the Forest Service. When federal auditors checked on a small sample of the 104 million acres of grazing lands under Forest Service control, they found that only 13 percent was



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being watched at all. As a result, most federal-land ranchers operate in a way that is years, if not decades, out of date. "We're still managing cows with 1960s thinking," Bill Platts, a consultant and former Forest Service specialist in fishery-livestock interaction, told me. Even when a rancher decides to rest a parcel, Platts says, he has seen federal regulators pursuing their jobs by "beating the brush" to find someone else to run cattle on it.

A REAL solution should begin with rewards and penalties that apply to both public and private lands, since sensitive riverside lands and their wildlife run through both. On federal lands government range managers should more strictly control how many cattle graze each parcel, when and how long they're there, and how much herbage they consume. Private property can be subject to other pressures, such as the leverage that could be created through state or local tax incentives and the dispersal of water rights. One federal law, the Clean Water Act, already authorizes the government to penalize ranchers who foul streams on private lands—a provision of the law that has almost never been enforced.

To make comprehensive regulation work, hundreds more BLM and Forest Service regulators must get out and visit livestock ranches. This does not mean hiring a flock of new bureaucrats. Many of the needed regulators are already on staff—they're just bogged down in paperwork. Lyle Andrews, one of the BLM's three rangeland managers in the John Day Basin, estimates that only 25 to 30 percent of their time is spent in the field. Last summer the Clinton Administration tried to free up Andrews. It adopted new rules for the BLM that should minimize paperwork, increase rangeland managers' powers, and let them cooperate with a rancher who wants to rest a parcel of land from grazing. Meanwhile, Republicans have countered with a plan of their own that would kill Clinton's changes—and expand ranchers' authority.

Perhaps it's a comment on human nature that the ranching community generally despises government interference, considering itself a paragon of American independence and self-sufficiency. As proof, some ranchers boast that theirs is the only major agricultural industry that survives without a government subsidy.

"How can it be a subsidy when we're paying the government to use it?" Alisa Harrison, a National Cattlemen's Association spokesperson, asked me. True, they don't enjoy the explicit price supports to which dairy and wheat farmers have become addicted. Indirectly, however, almost every rancher is subsidized in some way, resulting in expenses to the public of at least \$100 million a year just in support of the eleven western states.

The bulk of this subsidy falls into three categories. First there's the discount ranchers get on leases of public lands—and the maintenance expenses federal agencies must pick up as a result. These costs were conservatively estimated at \$52 million for 1990; more-aggressive tallies of the grazing programs' full administrative overhead have totaled up a price of \$200 million or more a year. The second big subsidy is what the government calls an "emergency feed program," supposedly reserved for times of drought, but now handed out habitually, even during wet years. This program has cost an average of \$26.5 million annually in these states for the past decade. Finally there's "animal damage control," the government's predator-killing program. In 1994 this program cost \$55.9 million nationwide, of which roughly \$22 million was spent on western livestock operations. The animals killed nationwide with this money included 163 black bears, 293 mountain lions, 1,928 bobcats, 8,973 foxes, and 85,571 coyotes. Presumably, such substantial government support of various kinds justifies holding ranchers accountable.

The government could use its subsidies to encourage other pursuits, such as rebuilding the wilderness. Jim Nelson, a Nevada Forest Service supervisor, has concluded that ranchers could raise as much beef as they do today on half as much land if they spent several decades managing it more carefully, giving some spots a complete rest. A forty-year time-out might strike some ranchers as unrealistic, but there are other ways to stay occupied. The marketing of outdoor recreation rights is one option. Throughout the West some ranchers already make as much money on their private lands by selling high-priced rights to hunt revived herds of wild elk, deer, and antelope, or returning flocks of turkey and quail, as they do running cattle.

Some experts suggest that abolishing

subsidies could actually help the range, as ranchers lose the extra feed and other supports that have encouraged them to overstock their pasturelands. Some combination of the free-market approach and a long rest may be ideal, but it's politically unrealistic right now.

Whatever step is taken next, it should

On federal lands government range managers should more strictly control how many cattle graze each parcel, when and how long they're there, and how much herbage they consume.

begin with regulations that confront the work still to be done on the range—and that charge full market rates for public leases.



At that point ranchers' adaptability could realistically be tested. Though it would help to know whether the rancher and the cowboy are really obsolete, the verdict is not yet in. The only way to arrive at one is to let ranchers face their true costs. Obviously, new expenses will force many out of business. When that time comes, the public can make its choice: increase the subsidy to preserve this rare but resonant icon of American identity, or decide that change is inevitable, and that ranchers like Tom Campbell must go the way of the horse and buggy. "If we really had a market environment, we'd lose people quicker, more efficiently," says Ed Chaney, an Idaho-based rangeland and watershed consultant. "But now, with our subsidy, we're just feeding the problem. The system now is slow attrition, grinding them out of the industry. The dollar cost of keeping them out there is mind-boggling." ♣

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Stuck With Strangers

*Help in a hard season—a ceremony of
assertion and doubt*

IN going about my winter business in the country around Brattleboro, Vermont, I have gotten stuck in the snow and ice about fifteen times. That is not a lot for twenty-five winters' worth of driving in Vermont, much of it up and down a rugged elevation of some local fame called

Newfane Hill, on whose side I live and whose ancient Algonquian name, I am told, means "Oil Trucks Put On Chains."

No, in these parts hitting the ditch an average of 0.6 times a year isn't bad at all. But more surprising to me than my relatively untroubled career in winter driving

is the fact that of those fifteen or so mishaps only one has required a tow truck. One dark night I slid off Route 5 just north of Putney to such good purpose that I had to call the wrecker. But every other time I have come to grief, I have been put right without benefit of clergy, so to speak. Why?

by Castle Freeman Jr.

Because I have been helped by my fellow man. Friends, neighbors, perfect strangers, have stopped, lent a hand, and gone on their way.

Like every other longtime winter driver in Vermont, I have had many helpers—though to be honest, I should say more

helpers than help. Through the long winters up here the icy mountain roads bring out some of the best, most altruistic instincts that people can have, but they bring them out by an elliptical route. For there is something in the sight of a car pathetically stranded on a snowy shoulder that inspires otherwise sensible men and women with the spirit of debate, the spirit of controversy. Getting helped out of a winter ditch by passing Good Samaritans, one finds oneself not only the grateful recipient of generous aid but also the object of a certain hill-country ritual of assistance.

A case in point:

ON a bright January morning a couple of years ago I was coming home up the hill, driving carelessly along trying to remember what, exactly, happened in the Defenestration of Prague, when suddenly I felt the hindquarters of my wagon begin to describe a counterclockwise arc—speedily, irresistibly, in a classic rear-end skid.

In this situation the advice of the experts is unanimous. You remain calm. You don't brake. You steer deftly in the direction of the skid, so that the momentum of the car can straighten it out. That is good advice—but I seldom follow it. I find that

what works for me in a skid is to hit the brakes as hard as I can, shut my eyes, and repeat certain words at increasing volume until I land wherever I'm going to land.

So it happened that morning in January: the rear went east, the front went west, and the whole show, with me in it, wound up half on the road, half in the ditch, pointing back down the hill, and stuck, stuck, stuck.

At this point in any such debacle my procedure is always the same. I turn off the motor and get out of the car. I then walk around the car, examining it closely but dispassionately, as though it were no car of mine but one I have discovered inexplicably abandoned by persons unknown. Doing this introduces an element of disassociation into the episode which prepares me to receive help when it arrives.

Help arrived that morning in the form of two fellows in a truck. They stopped, got out, and joined me in surveying the problem. We agreed that the road was slick, the car was mine, the car was stuck. (Here and in the next several paragraphs I reduce a fairly prolonged and complex exchange to its essentials.)

"Not bad stuck," one of the men said to his partner. "He's headed downhill. He ought to start up, straighten his wheels, and just tickle the accelerator. Just ease it out."

"He doesn't want to ease it," the other said. "He wants to punch it. Get in. Start up. Straighten out. Then punch it. Punch it."

"He doesn't want to punch it," said the first. "He punches it, he'll dig in. He'll never get off. We'll have to pull him."

Pull him? I thought. *Yes.*

Another car came up the road and stopped. A young woman got out. She wore a red woolen hat with a pompon. She came over to the car, got down on her knees and looked underneath, brushed snow away from the ditched rear wheel, and looked some more. She stood.

"He ought to ease it," the first man said.

"He ought to punch it," the second man said.

"He's only spinning one tire," the young woman said. "He ought to throw the wheel hard left, put it in reverse, and back it up. That will make him roll off the patch he's spinning on. Then he gets into forward and drives right out. Easy."

"He doesn't want to reverse," the first

man said. "He reverses, he'll get so far down in there he'll never get out. We'll have to pull him."

Pull him? I thought. *Why not?*

"Nobody's going to pull anybody," the young woman said. "Just do it," she said to me.

I did it. It didn't work. We had a storm of flying snow and dirt, and we had considerable screaming of tires, but I ended up a couple of feet farther down in the ditch than I had been, with my front end tilted now at a jaunty angle to the horizon. I got out of the car.

"It was worth a shot," the young woman said.

"I guess now we'll have to pull it?" I said.

"We can't pull it," the second man said. "We've got no chain."

"I've got a chain," the young woman said.

So the two fellows got her chain and hooked me up to their truck, and with them in the truck pulling, the young woman beside the car pushing, and me driving, we got me back in business easily enough. There followed the unhooking, the stowing of the chain, the thanks, the offer of payment, the offer's refusal, the return to vehicles, the beep, the wave, the parting. Time elapsed since help arrived: twenty minutes. Time required for effective help to be applied: two minutes. Time required for advice: eighteen minutes. Exactly 90 percent of the transaction, therefore, was occupied not with practical assistance but with . . . what?

WHAT was served? I'm not sure, but I suspect that these unhurried rural negotiations of suggestion and advice, assertion and doubt, amount to a kind of ceremony affirming a principle that many people—including, I'm afraid, me—prefer to neglect: Nobody does anything alone. Even those people who think they do—those people especially—need help, get help, take help gratefully, but never quite on their own terms. When your helpers arrive, they give what they have, in their own way, in their own time. Your part is to receive, to accept, and to learn, so that when you come to the same ceremony in the opposite role, you'll know what offering to bring. Someday the adviser will be you. What will you say?

I always tell them to punch it. "Punch it," I say. "Just punch it." ☞

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Otherworldly Madagascar

*From the lemurs to the landscape,
everything about the world's fourth-largest
island is surprising*

MANY have tried to get at the heart of what makes Madagascar so different from every other place in the world. "May I announce to you that Madagascar is the naturalist's promised land?" the Frenchman Philibert de Commerson wrote in 1771. "Nature seems to have retreated there into a private sanctuary, where she could work on different models from any she has used elsewhere." David Attenborough, who brought his first images of the island to the outside world in the early 1960s, de-

scribed "a place where antique outmoded forms of life that have long since disappeared from the rest of the world still survive in isolation." To me, the most evocative metaphor comes from Alison Jolly, the doyenne of lemur studies. In her discerning book *A World Like Our Own* (1980), Jolly says that on Madagascar it is as if "time had once broken its banks and flowed to the present down a different channel."

Down that channel has come a cornucopia of "weird and wonderful things," as

a scientist acquaintance put it to me recently. For monkey enthusiasts there are lemurs, the spry, wide-eyed relatives of monkeys. Birders can dull pencils making lists of vangas—birds that rival Darwin's finches for diversity—and of four other families unique to the island. I happen to be partial to the reptiles. Madagascar has more than half the world's chameleons, with their independently swiveling eyes and body-length tongues. And it is the only home of the leaf-tailed gecko, which looks like lichen until disturbed, when it opens a blood-red mouth and screams like a banshee.

Madagascar has landscapes as fanciful as anything conceived by Henri Rousseau, from tropical rain forest to a bizarre "spiny desert" that is unique to the island. Even the people are not what you'd expect. Though the island lies off Mozambique, its people hail originally from Indonesia. At times, while passing Malagasy, as the people of Madagascar are called, on the streets of the capital, Antananarivo, you'd swear you were in Jakarta. Spiced with African, Arabian, and French influences, the Malagasy culture is like no other.

Despite its enticements, Madagascar remains off the beaten track, as if the Mozambique Channel, which has isolated the island from Africa for more than 100 million years, had succeeded in keeping away tourists as well. For Madagascar not only is far from where tourists tend to live but also, though boundlessly rich in nature, is one of the world's poorest nations. This has implications for the things that tourists use. You can count Madagascar's top-flight hotels on two hands. Making a telephone call to a number within the country would tax the patience of Mother Teresa (though satellite links ease overseas calls). And then there are the roads. In many areas even the national highways seem more like motocross tracks. The roads are inescapable evidence of the fall in the country's fortunes during the seventeen-year socialist era. This ended in 1992 with a democratic presidential election; both the country's name, the Republic of Madagascar, and its leader, President Albert Zafy, are new since then.

But if you plan your route well and roll

A lemur amid Malagasy limestone



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with the punches that are inevitable in a nation with an annual per capita income of less than \$250, you can experience a singular and still very foreign land. And you can stay in fine hotels at very low rates. The exchange rate has lately been highly favorable to American tourists: between my first visit, in 1993, and my second, last March, the Malagasy franc went from 1,900 to 4,000 to the dollar. (The currency's recent behavior has been erratic; at this writing its value is 4,600 to the dollar.)

My more recent trip began at Toliara, a port town on the southwest coast. I joined a group of four other Americans to drive halfway up the island (end to end the island is as long as the distance from New York to Orlando). Our destination was Antananarivo, known simply as Tana, and we planned to spend a day each in three of the country's top nature reserves along the way. One biologist has called

the eighteenth century and made Tana their capital.

Accompanying Bruno were two drivers, Jocelin and Parson, who commanded the two four-wheel-drive vehicles that would be our transport for the next week. Unlike Bruno, they spoke no English. (Forget about trying to get by in Madagascar with just English at your disposal. Hire a guide who speaks Malagasy, because even French, which is the language

what was their colony until 1960. But as soon as Parson, who bore a striking resemblance to James Caan, turned his Toyota Land Cruiser onto Route Nationale 10, we got a good, hard feel for how bad Malagasy roads can be. In places the highway resembled a covered-wagon trail in the Old West, with deep ruts dug by cattle carts, still the principal means of transport in rural areas. "Piece of cake," Parson said, using his only English phrase, each

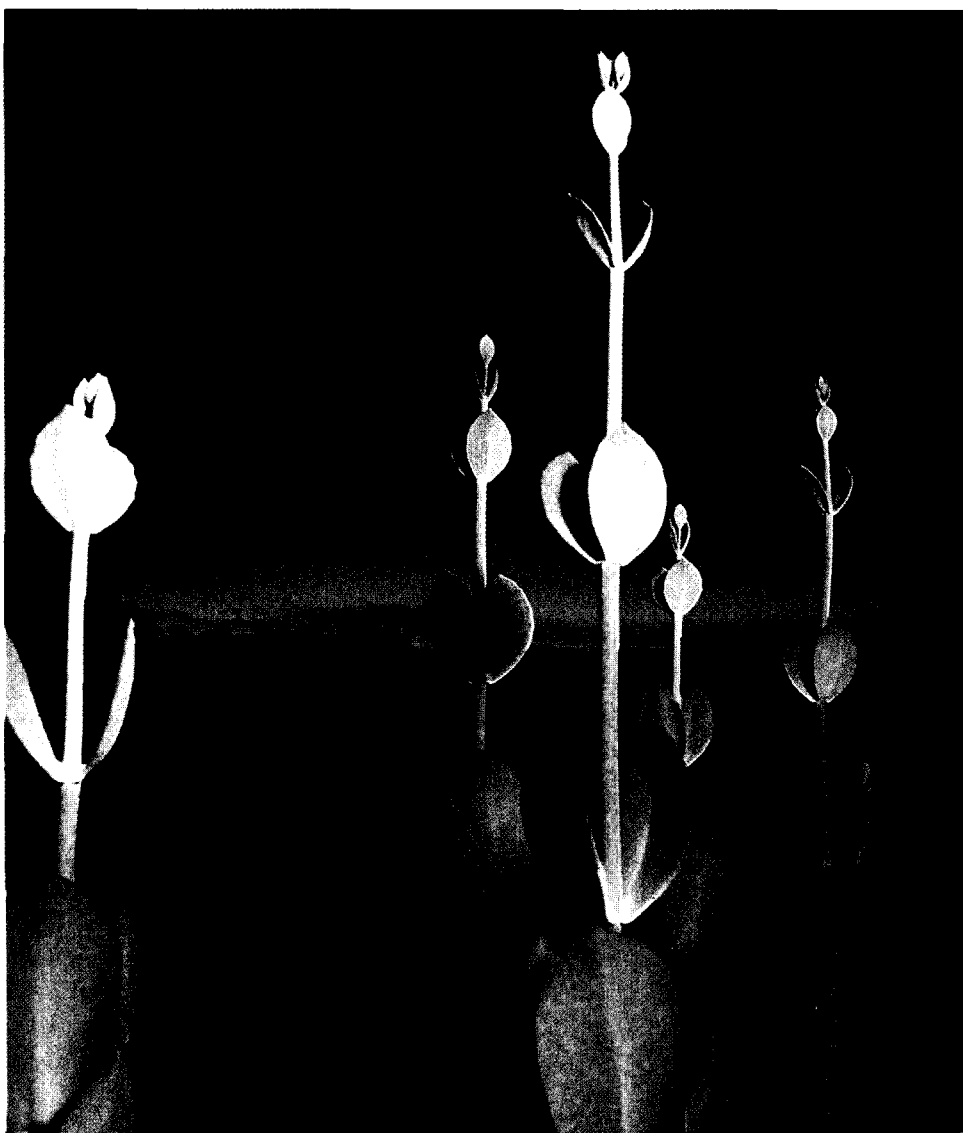
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Madagascar's thirty-odd reserves a "necklace of pearls"; I think of them as islands in a sea of degradation. Most of the forests that once blanketed Madagascar have been cleared for farming and grazing, and the continuing fast growth of the population, which now stands at 14 million, threatens the rest (Alison Jolly calls it a "tragedy without villains"). If you visit the island's nature reserves, you may be glad to know that your money is helping to protect what the World Wildlife Fund considers to be the world's No. 1 biodiversity hot spot: the park fees you pay are split between the protected-areas authority and local communities.

We were met in Toliara by Bruno, our trim, typically Indonesian-looking guide. Bruno is a member of the Merina, a tribe whose name means "those from the highlands." The Merina have dominated the seventeen other tribes in Madagascar ever since Merina kings unified the country in

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of commerce, is rarely spoken outside the cities.) Our bags were piled on top of one car. The roof of the other bore supplies, including two large jerry cans containing water and diesel fuel. In Madagascar there is no such thing as AAA. Between towns you're on your own.

Route Nationale 7 out of Toliara gave no hint of what was coming. It was paved three years ago by the French, who still provide a significant amount of aid to

time he stomped on the brakes to negotiate a particularly rugged patch of sun-hardened mud.

OUR first stop was Beza-Mahafaly, a lemur reserve. Lemurs come from the same evolutionary stock as we do, and they are arguably the country's biggest draw. Once found worldwide, lemurs, an early model of primate, could not compete with more highly evolved

monkeys and apes, and where they had to try, they went extinct. Left alone on Madagascar, lemurs have evolved into more than fifty species and subspecies. (About fifteen other species, some as big as apes, have gone extinct since human beings first set foot on the island, less than 2,000 years ago.)

Because Beza is primarily a research reserve, the few thatched sleeping huts there were set aside for scientists. So we

lows with private showers for \$64 a night.)

The next morning, after a breakfast of bread, guava jam, bananas, and strong Malagasy coffee, we went in search of lemurs. Our guide was a fiftyish local man named Manzagasy, who wore a red Marlboro hat and red shorts. The trails were overgrown—a sign of how few tourists make it this far south (Beza had

and-white-striped tails and masked faces, they might have been dressed to perform in a circus.

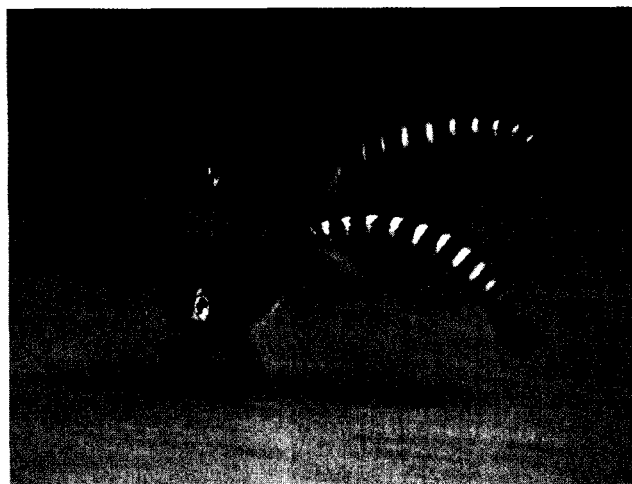
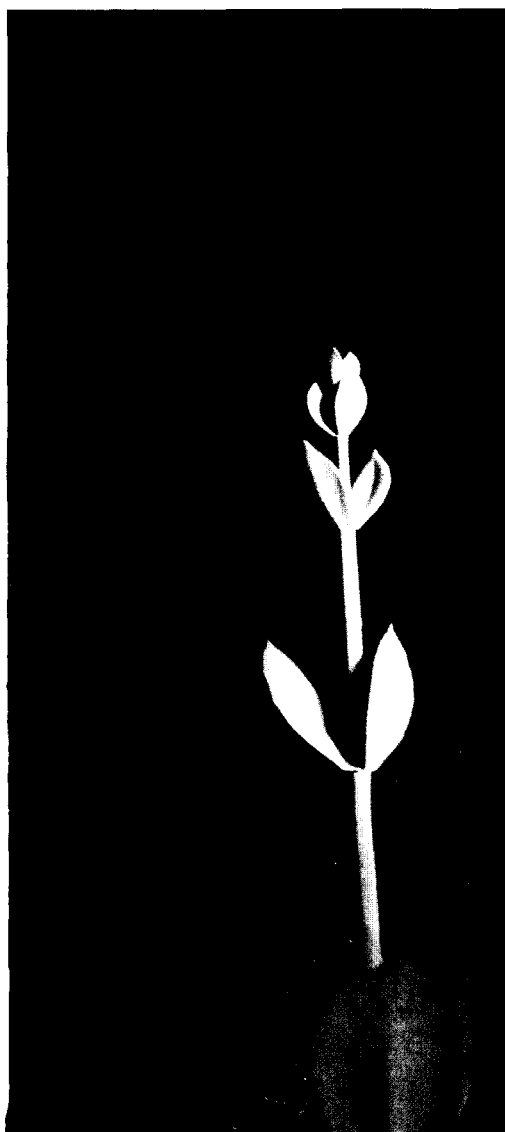
Even though it was the end of the six-month rainy season, it was dry. Because midday temperatures topped 100° in the shade, however, we waited until late afternoon to walk in Beza's spiny desert, which harbors trees that rival Van Gogh's

cypresses for expressiveness. We marveled at the comically bulbous baobabs, known as "upside-down trees" for the branches that splay like roots from their crowns, and at the cactuslike octopus trees, whose vertical branches poke at the sky like fingers. Other plants in the desert have gone to great evolutionary lengths to arm them-

selves against attack. Some sport thorns reminiscent of sharpened pencils; others ooze a milky latex that, if it gets in the eyes, can cause blindness. But we took care and were rewarded with a softly lit landscape straight out of a fairy tale.

At precisely 8:00 A.M. the next day—Bruno was a man for strict timetables—we drove back to Route Nationale 7 and bore east. We were headed for our second destination, Isalo National Park, the site of Madagascar's answer to the Grand Canyon. Long before we reached Isalo, we could see part of the massif after which the park is named: a wall of Jurassic sandstone rising from the plain like battlements. After an hour clambering around La Fenêtre, a natural rock window affording a panoramic view west over the plain we had just crossed, we drove a few minutes farther on to the three-star Relais de la Reine, our hotel for the next two nights.

Built three years ago by the French entrepreneur Gilbert Colombier, the hotel would, I think, have pleased Frank Lloyd Wright. It blended into the landscape so well that I didn't see it until we pulled up in front. The rooms (\$64 per person for a double, with meals) are decorated in a tastefully rustic style, with furniture and beams carved from local wood. After eight dusty hours on the road and a night



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Far left, Malagasy; left, kalanchoe in an eerie landscape; above, ring-tailed lemurs

only 130 last year). Overhead arched the wide-spreading tamarinds, which provide lemurs with food and lodging—and provide lemur-seekers like us with welcome shade.

After half an hour Manzagasy suddenly put his finger to his lips and pointed. It was hard to see through the dense foliage, but a sudden thrashing of leaves directed us to a pale blob on a high branch. It was a Verreaux's sifaka. Sifakas are a type of lemur that was named for its alarm call ("she-fahk!"); the Verreaux's is an exceptionally beautiful one. It has snow-white fur, a round black face, and a tail as long as its body. We watched as a band of five or six sifakas leaped fifteen-foot gaps in the canopy. When we were ready, Manzagasy moved on. The forest was hot and quiet. Now and then he stopped to point out a nocturnal sportive lemur staring down with amber eyes from its tree-trunk nest. We had hoped to find ringtails, the most gregarious of lemurs; just as we were about to give up on them, we came upon a group right on the trail. As curious about us as we were about them, they let us approach until we were only steps away. With their black-

pitched our tents on packed earth beneath oaklike tamarind trees. That evening the drivers, who doubled as cooks, laid out a feast of zebu steak (zebu being a kind of Asiatic ox), rice, leek salad, and sliced pineapple; Bruno did his part by making a tasty White Russian-like cocktail. (If camping is not your thing, Berenty, a private reserve in the southeast that protects a similar coterie of wildlife and habitats, has spacious twin-bedded bunga-

sleeping on the ground, we were ready for the plush beds and the large private bathrooms.

That evening, after meeting in the bar over bottles of Three Horses, the national beer, we followed a white-jacketed waiter into the high-ceilinged dining room, which looked out onto sunlit canyon walls. Monsieur Colombier changes his menu each night. The first night I dined on onion soup, kidneys in mustard sauce, and apple

den valleys cry out for exploration. Of Isalo, Lonely Planet's thorough guidebook says, "If you have time for only one wilderness foray in Madagascar, this should be it." The Irish writer Dervla Murphy concurs in her wry travel book *Muddling Through in Madagascar*, calling Isalo "an hallucinatory place."

Like America's great canyons, Isalo needs several days—or weeks—to be seen properly. We had only a day, and carried a picnic lunch into the high-walled Canyon des Singes ("Canyon of the Monkeys"), probably named for its resident white sifakas. With five or six days you could

end has it that the occupants were the Vazimba, an aboriginal people who are believed to have inhabited the island long before the Malagasy arrived in their outrigger canoes.

BRUNO had us up early the next day, for the long drive to the third reserve on our itinerary, the rain-forest park of Ranomafana. After several hours of driving across a high, treeless plain, we dropped down to Ihosy, the capital of the Baras. Malagasy place-names often have wonderful pronunciations, like something out of Dr. Seuss. Ihosy ("ee-oosh") was a lovely little market town. Tall, handsome Bara men in straw homburgs and brightly colored lambas drifted wraithlike through the streets. Low-hanging clouds and a strange quiet lent an otherworldly atmosphere. I would have liked to pause longer in Ihosy, but after provisioning ourselves for a picnic lunch, we drove on.

We had planned to camp in the rain forest that night, but soon after we entered Ranomafana, the road overruled that idea. In the dark and drizzle we passed a sign bearing a red skull and crossbones and the warning DANGER DU MORT! Just ahead a landslide had taken out a big chunk of the road. "Not a piece of cake," Parson said, looking despairingly into the gap. Fortunately, not only had a private coach already been sent from Tana to take us the rest of the way but, because our route involved a bit of backtracking, the coach was on our side of the slide. It was late, and the nearest good hotel was two hours

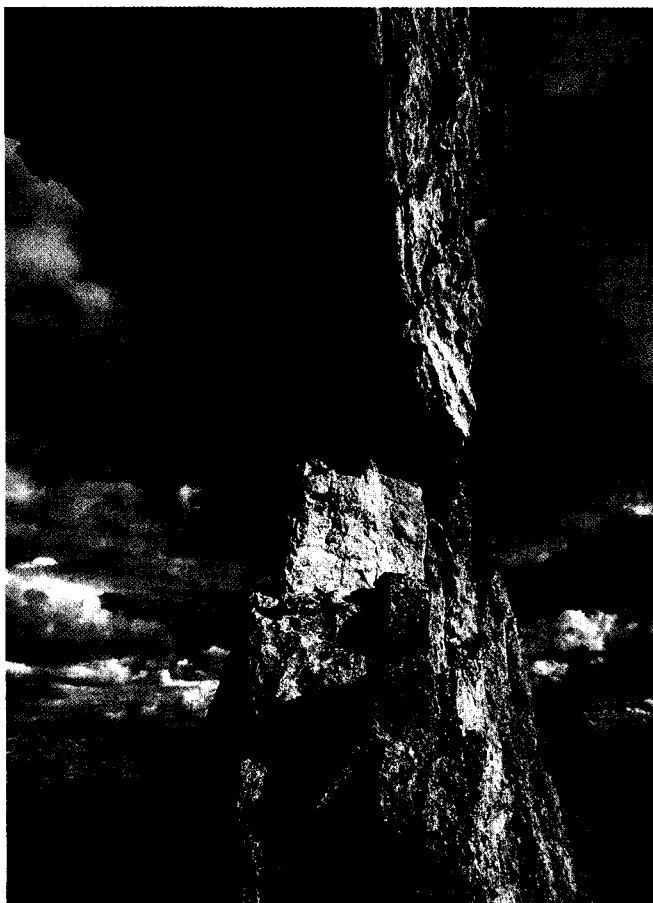
trek roundtrip through rarely trod canyons to the Grotte des Portugais, a deep cavern with signs of ancient habitation. Some historians hold that Portuguese sailors who were shipwrecked on the west coast in 1527 sheltered in the cave. But local Bara leg-

Above, Isalo National Park; above right, a leaf-tailed gecko; right, Ranomafana

tart, washing the meal down with domestic Betsileo wine; the second night I enjoyed a succulent roast zebu in mushroom sauce, with pommes frites and vegetable quiche, and a dessert of mocha cake.

Like Beza, Isalo has an arid climate, but there the similarities end. The local people are Bara, Madagascar's most African-looking tribe and reputedly its fiercest warriors. Isalo has plant species found only there, such as the peculiar elephant's foot, which looks like a gourd with arms. Most distinctive is the landscape. Its wildly eroded bluffs and hid-

ART WOLFE



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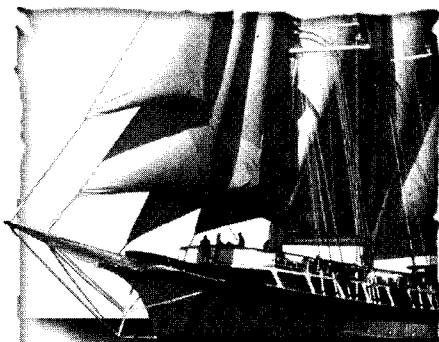
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back down the road, so the group decided to sleep across the coach's seats. The best news was that the remainder of the route was paved.

The next morning, after clambering across the washed-out hillside, we crossed a bamboo bridge over the rain-swollen Namorona River and hiked up a steep trail into the forest. Some of Madagascar's thousand-odd species of orchids clung to trees rising through the canopy like Jack's beanstalk. On the ground, mosses and ferns sparkling with tiny droplets festooned fallen logs. While my companions scanned the canopy for lemurs, I kept my focus lower down, searching for some of the park's lesser-known residents: chameleons, with their eerie eyes; bright-green day geckos; and the freakish giraffe-necked weevil. Alas, I had to settle for a single frog that we found in a stream.

The day was overcast and humid, and we were soon winded and sweaty. But we did not have long to wait before Claude, the teenage guide we had hired to show us Ranomafana, tracked down four of the reserve's twelve lemur species, including a handsome black cousin of the sifakas we had seen at Beza. As at Isalo, we had only a day at Ranomafana, which is almost three times the size of Acadia National Park and has much to offer the curious. With enough time, you could hire one of the park's many English-speaking guides and try your luck at finding some of the rain forest's more rarely seen mammals, such as the golden bamboo lemur and the fossa (pronounced *foosh*). Like a cross between a mongoose and a mountain lion, the fossa fills the niche left unclaimed by Africa's lions and other large predators, which evolved too late to set foot on Madagascar.

On the final leg to Tana we stopped for souvenirs in the wood-carving center of Ambositra and in Antsirabe, known for gems. Tana itself, draped over a dozen hills at an invigorating altitude of 4,200 feet, is an enchanting place. Its drawbacks—crime after dark, cars without catalytic converters, traffic jams—are more than made up for by the inherent good nature of the Malagasy and the anachronistic, almost medieval quality of the city.

The sights can be seen in a day. In the morning you could visit some of the city's impressive churches and pick up

souvenirs and a feel for Malagasy life in the Zoma ("Friday") market—a misnomer in that this raucous daily street fair in the center of town is held daily. In the afternoon you could take a taxi to the Tsimbazaza zoo. A good compendium of what there is to see in the reserves, the zoo showcases aye-ayes—the most bizarre of lemurs, made famous in Gerald Durrell's book *The Aye-aye and I*—and a wide selection of other creatures. There you can also see skeletons of some of Madagascar's long-extinct species, including the pygmy hippo and the flightless elephant bird, the largest bird that ever lived. My favorite sight was the city itself, with its narrow, hilly streets between the French-style brick houses of the Merina, who make up the bulk of the population of close to two million. With their red-tiled roofs and carved wooden balconies, the houses lend an Old World charm to this very Third World city.

By mid-afternoon we were ensconced in Tana's comfortable Hôtel Colbert. Located in the heart of Haute-Ville ("Upper Town"), the Colbert offers carpeted, air-conditioned rooms with TV, full bath, and a good view for rates that start at about \$100 a night. The Colbert's La Taverne restaurant is a favorite eating spot among Tana's well-to-do. The night I was there it appeared to be filled with expatriate French businessmen. Specialties include tripe in apple-brandied sauce and frog's legs, though I can vouch only for the zebu steak, which was delicious. The Colbert also has a casino, a pâtisserie, and several high-priced gift shops.

Package tours to Madagascar from the United States are scarce, but a growing number of companies in Great Britain offer trips (see the Lonely Planet guide *Madagascar and Comoros* for details). For customized travel, the California-based company Cortez Travel (800-854-1029), which ran the trip I was on, comes highly recommended by Lonely Planet and by Alison Jolly. A third approach: through my employer, Earthwatch (800-776-0188), researchers welcome paying volunteers to help them study lemur behavior at two sites on the island.

Whatever means you choose, if you are intrigued, go soon, because Madagascar is on the verge of being discovered. Who knows? By the time you get there, the road from Toliara may be paved all the way to Tana. ☉

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*If ever a man
did, George Washington
had "bearing," an attitude
of his body that helped
to make his fame.*

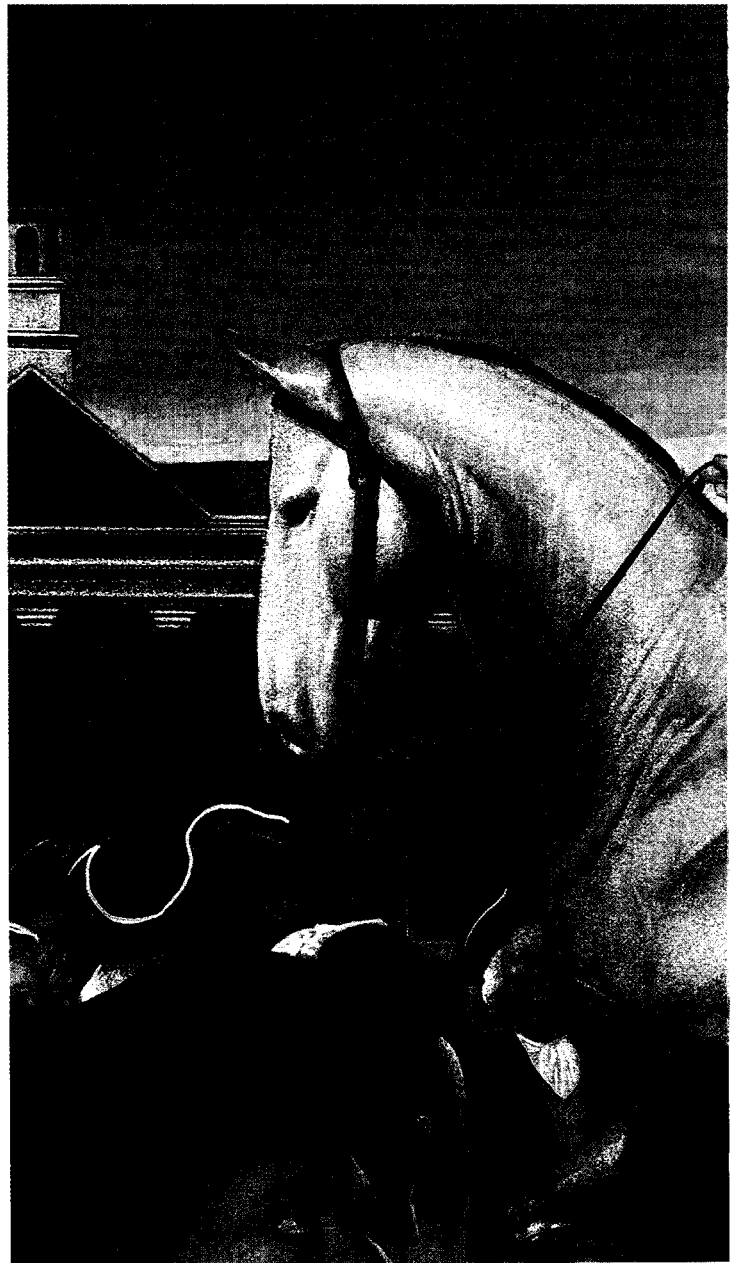
*He was also of strong
and flaring temperament, which
lent energy to his purpose
but made his anger
terrible. And, to contain
and channel his high feeling,
he had a personal
moral code built on maxims
he had studied from youth.
An essay on character*



by **RICHARD BROOKHISER**

THE list of personal events and traits that enabled George Washington to do what he did is long and various, and ranges from a youthful bout of smallpox, which immunized him against the disease, to a fondness for the Stoic philosopher Seneca, which may have immunized him against temper tantrums. But the important qualities that shaped Washington fall into only a few categories. His character may be described as a three-story building. The top floor was furnished with the political ideas of eighteenth-century America, with which we are familiar. But the other two stories were equally important. The second

A MAN O



floor was his morals—and to these we will return. The ground floor consisted of what was given to him by nature and cultivated by the conditions of his life: his physicality and his temperament. His form was imposing, and his temper was dangerous. Displaying the one and controlling the other were essential to his success as a leader.

In 1760 Captain George Mercer, who had been Washington's aide in the Virginia militia, wrote a description of him.

[He is as] straight as an Indian, measuring six feet two inches in his stockings [at his death he was measured at six feet three and a half inches] and weighing 175 pounds. . . .

N H O R S E B A C K



His frame is padded with well-developed muscles, indicating great strength . . . He is wide shouldered but has not a deep or round chest; is neat waisted, but is broad across the hips and has rather long legs and arms. His head is well-shaped, though not large, but is gracefully poised on a superb neck. A large and straight rather than a prominent nose; blue gray penetrating eyes which are widely separated and overhung by a heavy brow. His face is long rather than broad, with high round cheek bones, and terminates in a good firm chin. He has a clear though rather colorless pale skin which burns with the sun. A pleasing and benevolent though a commanding countenance, dark brown hair

which he wears in a cue. His mouth is large and generally firmly closed, but which from time to time discloses some defective teeth. His features are regular and placid with all the muscles of his face under perfect control, though flexible and expressive of deep feeling when moved by emotions. In conversation he looks you full in the face, is deliberate, deferential, and engaging. His demeanor at all times composed and dignified. His movements and gestures are graceful, his walk majestic, and he is a splendid horseman.

Some of the physical details of this portrait changed over the course of Washington's life. His defective teeth came out,

to be replaced by various sets of almost equally defective false teeth. And he gained weight, though only up to a point: by the time he was fifty-one he weighed 209 pounds; fifteen years later he weighed one pound more. Mercer does not mention the light pockmarks on his nose, souvenirs of his disease, probably because so many people in the eighteenth century bore them. But the general impression that Mercer gave would be registered by other observers for the next forty years, often in nearly identical words. One English visitor wrote in 1796, "Washington has something uncommonly majestic and commanding in his walk, his address, his figure, and his countenance." It was an impression not of glamour, or of beauty—some of his features (the large hands, the shallow chest) were potentially unattractive—but of the presence of the whole figure. Many of us have bodies that sit or stand dully, or droop like suits on wire hangers. Washington's organized the space around it, as a dancer's arms or legs seem to stretch beyond the tips of the fingers or toes.

Soldiers were very much aware of his presence and his doings. James Thacher, a medical officer of the American Army, wrote that when Washington first took command, in 1775, the men were "much gratified" to be able to pick him out from among his aides at a glance. The Marquis de Lafayette's rapturous description of him at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, even after making allowance for hero worship, explains why Washington's men considered him heroic: "His graceful bearing on horseback, his calm and deportment which still retained a trace of displeasure . . . were all calculated to inspire the highest degree of enthusiasm. . . . I thought then as now that I had never beheld so superb a man."

Women also took note of him. In a letter urging him to serve a second term Mrs. Eliza Powel, a Philadelphia hostess, cited his looks among his qualifications for office, and argued that his physical stature enhanced his political stature: "Your very figure is calculated to inspire confidence with people whose simple good sense appreciates the noblest qualities of mind with the heroic form." After she first met Washington, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband,

You had prepared me to entertain a favorable opinion of him, but I thought the one half was not told me. . . . Those lines of Dryden instantly occurred to me

"Mark his Majestick fabrick! he's a temple
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine
His Souls the deity that lodges there.
Nor is the pile unworthy of the God."

Years later John Adams, with less enthusiasm, compared Washington to "the Hebrew sovereign chosen because he was taller by the head than the other Jews." Washington was certainly a head taller than Adams.

Mercer began his description by calling Washington "straight as an Indian." This comparison, too, recurred over the years. "Had he been born in the forests," wrote Gilbert

Stuart, who painted him in his sixties, "he would have been the fiercest man among the savage tribes." In such ways would Europeans and even Americans add a dash of local color to figures they associated with the frontier. But the frontier was real, and Washington had spent more time in it than many of his contemporaries—more, certainly, than all but a few subsequent Presidents. He had fought alongside and against Indians, and he entertained them in the presidential mansion. The simile may have been romantic, but it was not fanciful.

Washington's body commanded attention because of its prowess as well as its appearance. A visitor to Mount Vernon in 1772 remembered tossing an iron bar on the lawn with some young men, when Washington asked "to be shown the pegs that marked the bounds of our effort; then smiling, and without putting off his coat, held out his hand for the missile." Washington's toss "struck" the ground far, very far beyond our utmost limits. . . . the Colonel, on retiring, pleasantly observed, "When you beat my pitch, young gentlemen, I'll try again." Garry Wills has pointed out that the anecdote is already, in that telling, taking the shape of a legend, but there is no reason to doubt it. Washington boasted that he had once thrown a stone up to the Natural Bridge, a 215-foot-high rock arch in the Shenandoah Valley. His workaday feats of strength and stamina were scarcely less remarkable. During the Revolutionary War he could stay awake and on horseback for days at a stretch. On his first expedition to the Pennsylvania wilderness he walked for a week through snowy, pathless woods, fell off a raft into an ice-choked river, spent the night on an island, and then pressed on to a trading post. His traveling companion, a frontiersman, came down with frostbite; he did not.

Many of his pastimes were active and such as would show him off. He attended a dancing school, and he practiced what he had learned until he was in his late fifties. During his first term as President he carefully described in his diary the balls held in his honor, and the number and comeliness of the women in attendance: "There were about seventy-five well dressed and many of them very handsome ladies" at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, "among whom . . . were a greater proportion with much blacker hair than are usually seen in the southern states."

Another activity that was part hobby, part simple necessity, was riding. Thomas Jefferson (who, as a Virginian, knew what he was talking about) called Washington "the best horseman of his age, and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback." Washington's hours in the saddle are evident even in nonequestrian pictures of him: John Trumbull's portrait after the Battle of Trenton clearly shows a pair of well-developed thighs. When I showed it to a body-builder, she said, "Nice quads."

A typical day at Mount Vernon began with a circuit of his farms. During his first year as President he sometimes rode from southern Manhattan to Morningside Heights and back,

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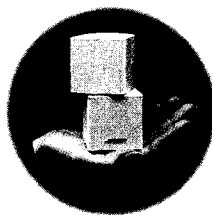
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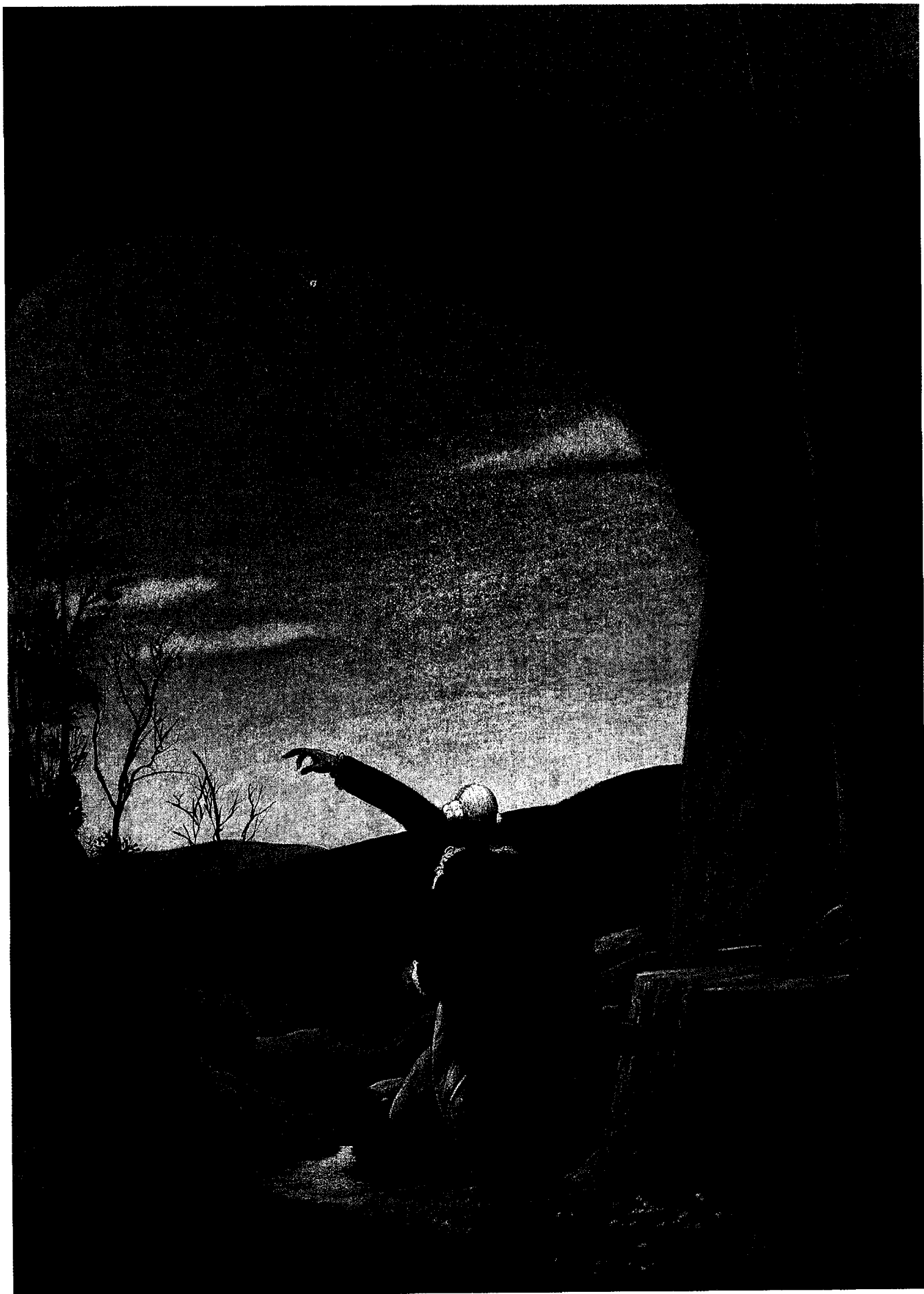


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a round trip of fourteen miles. "He rode, as he did every thing, with ease, elegance, and with power," George Custis, his step-grandson, remembered. His "perfect and sinewy frame . . . gave him such a surpassing grip with his knees, that a horse might as soon disencumber itself of the saddle as of such a rider." Washington tested his firmness in the saddle on many a fox hunt. He acquired a pack of hounds in 1767; his diary two years later records a month during hunting season like this: January 4, Fox hunting; 10, Fox hunting; 11, Fox hunting; 12, "Went out in the Morng. with the Hounds"; 16, "Went a ducking"; 17, Fox hunting; 18, Fox hunting; 19, Fox hunting; 20, Fox hunting; 21, Fox hunting; 25, "Hunting below Accatinck"; 28, "Went a Huntg." The hunts began before dawn and could last up to seven hours. Washington followed his pack closely, and was "always in at the death . . . yielding to no man the honor of the brush."

In egalitarian ages riding may have sinister political connotations. A "man on horseback" is a would-be dictator. An

English Puritan of the seventeenth century declared that "none comes into the world with a saddle upon his



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back neither any booted and spurred to ride him"—a sentiment echoed in the nineteenth century by Jefferson. What those democrats ignored is the appeal of the centaur. A spectator identifies with both the rider and the mount, admiring the rider's control of a beautiful and powerful animal, and appreciating the guidance of knowing legs and hands. Certainly Lafayette at Monmouth, and other soldiers on other occasions, appreciated Washington's firmness in the saddle. Today such feelings can be savored only indirectly, from westerns: in Washington's day it was possible to experience the emotion without denial.

Washington displayed his figure in uniforms. He had a lifelong interest in shows and spectacles of all kinds—plays, circuses, puppet shows, exhibitions of wild animals—but the show with the longest run was himself. In August of 1755, after General Edward Braddock's army had been destroyed by the French and the Indians in the wilderness, Virginia raised a regiment to defend itself, and put Washington in command. Children's books still say that Washington had advised Braddock to take his men out of red coats and dress them in forest colors—advice the Englishman supposedly ignored. How likely all this is may be judged from the uni-

form Washington designed for himself and the officers of his regiment, which was hardly that of a guerrilla: "the coat to be faced and cuffed with scarlet and trimmed with silver; a scarlet waistcoat with silver lace; blue breeches; and a silver laced hat." He designed his last uniform during the war scare of 1798: "a blue coat with yellow buttons and gold epaulettes (each having three silver stars). . . . The coat to be without lapels, and embroidered on the cape, cuffs, and pockets. A white plume in the hat to be a further distinction." Washington's waistcoats and plumes were not the affectations of a dandy. He wore uniforms because he was a soldier, or—as when he appeared before the Continental Congress in military garb—because he hoped to become one. He looked good in them because he looked good. Men responded to the spectacle.

"It is an interesting question," Thoreau wrote, "how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes. Could you, in such a case, tell surely of any company of civilized men which belonged to the most respected class?" George Orwell, going even further, argued that leaders are if anything remarkable for their "quite fan-

tastic ugliness." A gallery of "the great ones of the earth" circa 1944, he wrote, would include "Mussolini with his scrubby dewlap, the chinless de Gaulle, the stumpy short-armed Churchill, Gandhi with his long sly nose and huge bats' ears. . . ." Washington would stand out from both Thoreau's locker-room lineup and Orwell's rogue's gallery, because he passed the first test of politics.

The body is the basic unit of all human intercourse, including politics. Civilization modifies or suppresses that fact, in the interest of cultivating other aspects of people. Yet even rulers who are intelligent, prudent, or visionary must make a sensual impact if they are to lead. If their bodies cannot command attention, they must compel it by secondary physical means, such as eloquence, or by props—masks, regalia, Air Force One. (Gandhi used the most ostentatious props of any modern leader—the dhoti and the walking stick.) Republics, which profess to dispense with props, fall back on the primal importance of the body. Sixteen of America's Presidents have fought in battle, the ultimate physical test: Washington, Monroe, Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Taylor, Pierce, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Bush.

Two who did not were college athletes: Ford and Reagan. Americans admired Franklin D. Roosevelt for his struggles with polio, but they would not have admired him so much as a leader if he had not also been handsome and dashing (and if he had not carefully concealed his wheelchair). Washington had physical authority in its simplest form, and though he enhanced it with exercise and adornment, they functioned as supplements, not substitutes. He “has so much martial dignity in his deportment that you would distinguish him to be a general and a soldier from among ten thousand people,” wrote Benjamin Rush, a physician and politician, in October of 1775. “There is not a king in Europe that would not look like a valet de chambre by his side.”

TREMENDOUS IN HIS WRATH

WASHINGTON’S temperament was more complicated than his “Majestick fabrick,” though the two had some relation. Just as big dogs are less excitable than small ones, so Washington showed something of a big man’s ease and composure—up to a point. He enjoyed company and entertaining, especially at Mount Vernon; accounts of his discomfort at the dinner table come from the time of his presidency, when the table was not truly his own. Gentlemen were expected to entertain, by virtue of their station in life, but had he not taken to his role, guests would not so often have described him as “affable” or “amiable.” He had one of the sure signs of a capacious spirit: the ability to laugh at another’s jokes (he favored surprising scenes and ironic juxtapositions). Even though Washington lectured Gouverneur Morris, he enjoyed the sarcasm of the younger politician; until other aspects of Arnold’s character assumed prominence, he enjoyed the wit of Benedict Arnold. A subtler mark of Washington’s hospitality of mind appears in his letters, in the changes his style underwent depending on whom he was addressing. When he corresponded with Lafayette, his prose took on some of Lafayette’s ingenuous warmth. One of Washington’s most charming letters was written to a man who most needed to be charmed: an amateur composer. “What, alas! can I do to support [your music]?” he wrote to Francis Hopkinson, who had sent him a set of pieces for the harpsichord. “I can neither sing one of the songs, nor raise a single note on any instrument to convince the unbelieving, but I have, however, one argument which will prevail with persons of true taste (at least in America), I can tell them that it is the production of Mr. Hopkinson.” “[Washington] has so happy a faculty of appearing to accommodate and yet carrying his point,” Abigail Adams wrote, “that if he was not really one of the best-intentioned men in the world, he might be a very dangerous one.”

His temperament had its raw edges, however, and when they were incautiously touched, he could become dangerous to those around him. George Mercer noted that Washington’s

skin was pale, and easily burned; it was also thin. One English guest at Mount Vernon, after taking due note of his “affability and accommodation,” added that there was “a certain anxiety on his countenance which marks extreme sensibility.” Washington was remarkably sensitive to hostile criticism. Though he came in for less of it than any other President has done, he did get some, chiefly from a handful of Republican editors, who called him variously a gambler, a cheapskate, a horse beater, a dictator, and “a most horrid swearer and blasphemer.” “I think he feels those things more than any person I ever yet met with,” Jefferson wrote after Washington complained to him of the tone of Philip Freneau’s *National Gazette*. Jefferson knew well what Washington was complaining of, since he kept Freneau, a journalistic hatchet man, on the State Department payroll.

Like many sensitive people, Washington had a temper. He was passionate for distinction and for having his way, and when he was frustrated, his affability could vanish. Gilbert Stuart likened him not just to an Indian but to a fierce Indian. Another English guest at Mount Vernon, this one a comic actor, saw in his face a “compression of the mouth and [an] indentation of the brow . . . suggesting a habitual conflict with and mastery over passion.” It is interesting that a portrait painter and an actor, two professional students of character and appearance, saw such similar things in him. Washington’s passions had shown themselves for all to see at Monmouth Courthouse; the “trace of displeasure” noted by Lafayette was left over from dressing down a general who had retreated without orders.

But Washington’s temper and willfulness were not detected only by experts, or displayed only in battlefield crises. They were a lifelong presence, in war and in peace. When he was sixteen years old, and had begun surveying the holdings of his in-laws and neighbors, the Fairfaxes, Thomas, Lord Fairfax, the head of the family, sent an assessment of the young man to Washington’s mother: “I wish I could say that he governs his temper.” Washington’s first battle, eight years later, a wilderness tangle that touched off the French and Indian War, showed him to be headstrong and high-handed, as well as bold and enterprising. One of Britain’s Indian allies who had been with Washington in battle “complained very much” of Washington’s behavior; he “command[ed] the Indians as his slaves,” and “would by no means take advice. . . . but was always driving them on to fight by his directions.”

These were the excesses of a youth. But Alexander Hamilton wrote of the forty-eight-year-old Washington, after four years’ service on his staff, that he was “remarkable [neither] for delicacy nor for good temper.” Hamilton was in a bad mood himself when he wrote that, for Washington had recently chewed him out. “Two days ago, the General and I passed each other on the stairs” at headquarters. “He told me he wanted to speak to me. I answered that I would wait upon him immediately.” Two minutes later, by Hamilton’s own

count. "I met him at the head of the stairs where, accosting me in an angry tone, 'Colonel Hamilton,' said he, 'you have kept me waiting at the head of the stairs these ten minutes. I must tell you, sir, you treat me with disrespect.'" Hamilton resigned then and there, as he said, "without petulancy," which was obviously untrue—though, to do him justice, he was not the only petulant man on the staircase.

In 1793, during a period of Franco-American tension, a pro-French satire describing Washington's execution by guillotine was mentioned at a Cabinet meeting. Jefferson recorded what happened next with a seismologist's care. Washington became

much inflamed, got into one of those passions when he cannot command himself. . . . [said] that he had never repented but once having slipped the moment of resigning his office, and that was every moment since, and that *by God* he had rather be in his grave than in his present situation. That he had rather be on his farm than to be made *emperor of the world*. . . . That that *rascal Freneau* sent him three of his papers every day, as if he thought he would become the distributor of his papers, and that he could see in this nothing but an impudent design to insult him. He ended in this high tone.

Late in 1795, when Edmund Randolph, a former Secretary of State who had resigned under pressure, published a vindication of his own conduct, Timothy Pickering, the current Secretary, witnessed a similar scene. Washington enumerated Randolph's defects, cried "He has written and published this," and threw the pamphlet to the floor. There are problems with the details of Pickering's account, as there are with those of Hamilton's. Pickering was remembering an incident many years after the fact; Hamilton wrote two days later, but in a fit of pique. Both stories nonetheless agree with Jefferson's, and with Jefferson's considered judgment in his last, formal portrait of the man, that Washington's "temper was naturally irritable and high-toned," and when "it broke its bonds, he was most tremendous in his wrath."

The episodes described by Washington's three political associates have something else in common: each of the outbursts recounted came to a quick and definite end. As Hamilton himself admitted, "less than an hour" after their clash Washington sent an aide to tell Hamilton how highly he thought of him, and to express the hope that a talk between them might heal the breach. Although Hamilton rejected the olive branch, Washington gave him an infantry brigade to command, and entrusted him with a crucial attack at Yorktown eight months later. The topic under discussion when Washington's guillotining came up had been whether to embarrass France by publicizing certain indiscretions of its ambassador. Although the satire that set Washington off was the work of French sympathizers, he decided when he became calm again to continue current policy, which was to be discreet. He would not respond to provocation by needlessly

provoking a foreign power. And in the third case, after spurning Randolph's vindication, Washington "calmly resumed his seat. The storm was over."

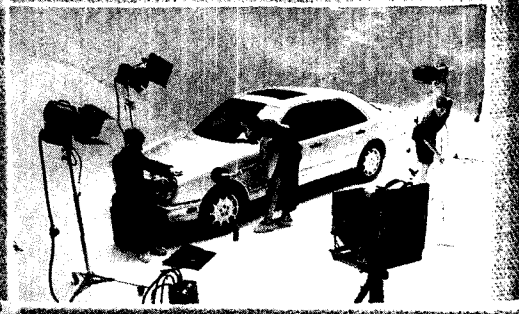
Anger sometimes burns itself out. Emotional storms can clear the air. But anger can also be like the first leak through a crack in a dam which brings on a deluge. The pattern of closure in Washington's outbursts suggests deliberate control. They ended because he willed them to end. Considering the problems that arose during his eight and a half years as Commander in Chief and his eight years as President, there must have been many storms that were controlled before they burst out. Virtually every observer who noted Washington's temper also noted the close rein he kept on it—including Washington himself. Henry Lee, a family friend, once told the Washingtons that the painter Stuart had said his subject had a temper. Martha Washington exclaimed that Stuart had been out of line to say so. Lee finished the story: Stuart had added that the temper was under "wonderful control." "Mr. Stuart is right," Washington remarked. Right on both counts.

Washington's temperament was like the horses he rode. A high tone can be anger; it can also be courage. The young man who brushed aside Indian advice and rushed to defeat was the same man who, later in that war, stopped his men from firing at each other in the night by stepping between them and striking their muskets up with his sword. In the next war, at the Battle of Princeton, he led his men so close to the enemy's line that an aide pulled his hat over his eyes, out of fear that Washington would be felled by the volley. A sense of latent anger or suppressed force can be an aspect of courage—an emphasis and a highlight. But if spirit is to manifest itself as courage and not flow away in pointless eruptions, it must be channeled and directed.

The few odd features of his body were integrated into a powerful whole by grace and demeanor, by the way Washington moved and carried himself. Physical traits balanced one another like counterweights. Passions are not so responsive to mutual influence; left to themselves, they jostle together, each seeking only its own fulfillment. In order to integrate them successfully, Washington had to draw on other areas of his character.

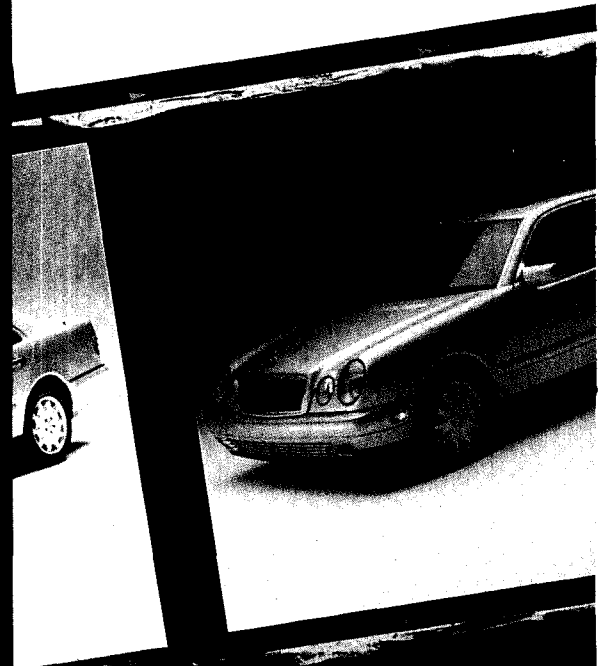
A ROMAN MORALITY

A MAN'S stature and temperament are more or less given to him by nature, but good behavior is something that must be learned. If he follows a good example regularly enough, then good actions may become second nature to him. The intersection of virtue, habit, and precept is pinpointed in the word "morals," which simultaneously opens out to morality, right and wrong, and delves down into manners, customs, mores. Morals were the second story of Washington's character. Throughout his career as a leader he wrestled with the problem of national self-government. Morals were the way he governed himself.



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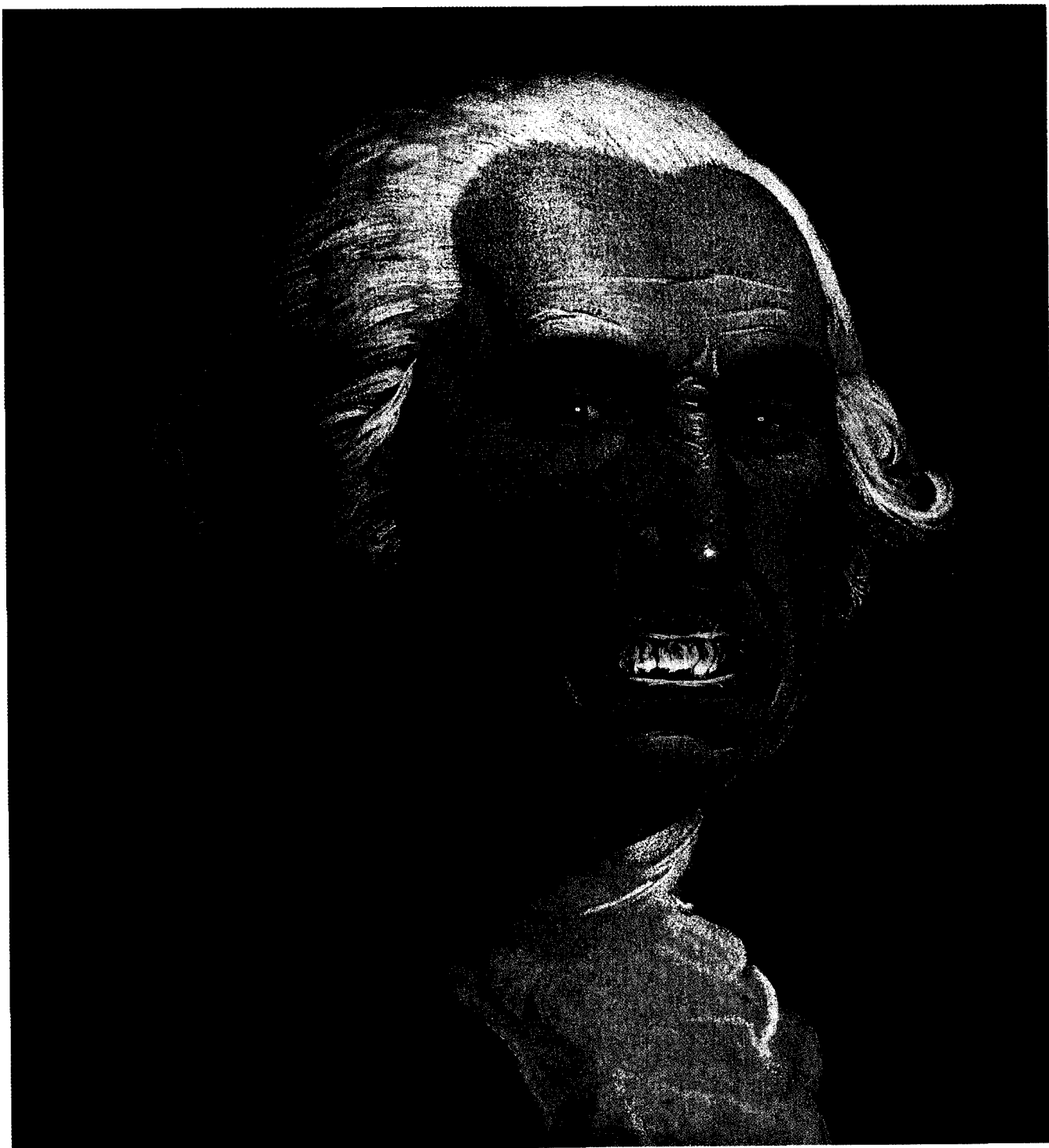
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Washington's contemporaries were greatly interested in encouraging goodness with good advice, in adults as well as in children. Benjamin Franklin related in his *Autobiography* that as a young man he had drawn up a list of thirteen virtues he wished to acquire, and a program for practicing them. "I was surpriz'd to find myself so much fuller of Faults than I had imagined, but I had the Satisfaction of seeing them diminish." One of the most popular sources of guidance in his day, which Washington himself might have cited as an influence, was the virtues of the Romans. Historians and biographers have certainly cited them. "So everyone" in the Amer-

ican government, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick write in *The Age of Federalism*, "was more or less Roman. George Washington ranked first, and John Adams was the next Roman below him."

For all their artistic and philosophical brilliance, the Greeks were failures at politics; Hamilton, in *The Federalist*, expressed "horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated." The Romans captured the American imagination because they had done what the Americans themselves hoped to do—sustain an extensive republic over a course of centuries. The society of Revolutionary War officers

called themselves the Cincinnati; “president,” “congress,” and “senate” were all Roman terms. But the Roman example was also cautionary, for when the Romans lost their virtue, they slid into empire. When Franklin said, in response to a question from Eliza Powel, that the Constitutional Convention had produced “a republic, if you can keep it,” he and she would have remembered that the Romans had failed to keep theirs.

Washington encountered the Roman atmosphere long before the Revolution. He bandied about Roman allusions with the Fairfaxes: William Fairfax, who managed the Fairfax holdings, wrote to Colonel Washington at his frontier post letters decorated with occasional philosophical reflections, including the reminder that Washington’s trials as an officer were, after all, less onerous than Caesar’s. But Washington’s extended exposure to the idea of Roman virtue, beyond sententious letters, came from two popular works by or about Romans, filtered through an English sensibility: *Seneca’s Morals*, a collection of essays by the first-century philosopher and playwright, translated in 1682 by the English pamphleteer

Roger L’Estrange, and Joseph Addison’s 1713 drama *Cato*. Wash-

POLITENESS AS POLITICS

A SET of precepts that meant much more to Washington, and that has drawn some, though perhaps not enough, attention from historians, is one that he had copied out by hand by the age of sixteen: “Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation.” The rules outline a different map of morality, and a different constellation of virtues. During his second presidential term Mrs. Henrietta Liston, the wife of the British ambassador, asserted that Washington had “perfect good breeding, & a correct knowledge of even the etiquette of a court,” though how he had acquired that, “heaven knows.” Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin had lived in Europe for years; no wonder they knew their way around a drawing room. Mrs. Liston did not know that Washington had been practicing his manners for half a century, along with the morals that they implied.

The “Rules of Civility”—110 in all—are based on a set composed by French Jesuits in 1595. In 1640 an English translation appeared, ascribed to Francis Hawkins, the



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ington acquired a copy of *Seneca’s Morals* in his late teens, and he quoted lines and phrases from *Cato* all his life.

Aside from a few discrete arguments and a general air of moral striving, however, the noble Romans do not much resemble Washington. He took them as an inspiration, and perhaps also as a corrective to certain of his flaws. But the “philosophic” state of mind, as described by Seneca, can seem inert and torpid: “The true felicity of life is to be free from perturbations. . . . Not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears, but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is abundantly sufficient; for he that is so, wants nothing.” Washington loved Mount Vernon as much as anything else in his life, but if that had been all he loved or cared for, he could easily have rested there.

The trouble with the Roman virtues, or at least those that Washington studied, is that they are inhumane. As *Cato* approaches its climax—and its hero’s suicide—one of the republican remnant argues for surrender, saying that, after all, Caesar has “the virtues of humanity.” “Curse on his virtues!” Cato replies. “They’ve undone his country.” The noble Romans offered to solve life’s problems by keeping others at arm’s length, or by hectoring them—or worse.

twelve-year-old son of a doctor. (The precocious Hawkins was supposed to have made his translation four years earlier.) The Hawkins version of the rules went through eleven editions over the next three decades. How it got to Virginia in the middle of the next century is unknown. Presumably a schoolmaster or a tutor made Washington write the rules out, in part as an exercise in penmanship. Washington’s copy is in the second half of an exercise book, after samples of assorted legal forms and some poems.

Several of the rules cautioned against Seneca’s *bête noire*, anger: “In reproving show no signs of choler but do it with all sweetness and mildness,” advised No. 45. “Be not angry at table whatever happens and if you have reason to be so, show it not . . . especially if there be strangers” (No. 105). Others were rudimentary bulwarks against the grossness of life in an age when a traveler at an inn might share a bed with a stranger. “Kill no vermin, or fleas, lice, ticks, etc. in the sight of others” (No. 13). “Spit not into the fire . . . nor set your feet upon the fire, especially if there be meat before it” (No. 9).

But the overall focus was established in the very first rule: “Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.” The “Rules of Civil-

ity” are “virtues of humanity”—guidelines for dealing with others, based on attending to their situations and their sensibilities. Seneca and Addison were concerned with a man’s peace of mind and rectitude; the “Rules” are concerned with men. “When you see a crime punished, you may be inwardly pleased; but . . . show pity to the offending sufferer” (No. 23). “Treat [artificers and persons of low degree] with affability and courtesy, without arrogance” (No. 36). “When a man does all he can, though it succeed not well, blame not him that did it” (No. 44). “Cleanse not your teeth with the table cloth napkin, fork, or knife; but if others do it, let it be done without a peep to them” (No. 100). The decent way to behave toward criminals, craftsmen, honest failures, and boors varies in detail, but the principle of approach is the same.

Washington bought handbooks of politeness as an adult, and the recipients of his courtesy (along with comments on it) were legion, from Henrietta Liston to the coughing guest at Mount Vernon who was mortified when his host appeared in the middle of the night with a bowl of tea. His attention to civility also had political ramifications. When he gestured to Vice President Jefferson to precede him from the dais at Adams’s inauguration, he was making a political point, about the rule of law, not men. But the lesson had first been taught him as a rule of civility: “They that are in dignity or in office have in all places precedence” (No. 33). Rule No. 32 foreshadowed political events in a way that is almost uncanny. Superficially it is about who gets the best bed: “To one that is your equal, or not much inferior, you are to give the chief place in your lodging, and he to whom it is offered ought at the first to refuse it, but at the second to accept though not without acknowledging his own unworthiness.” The maxim begins with household arrangements but ends by enouncing a principle of accepting honor only with reluctance and modesty, which Washington was to follow when he became Commander in Chief, president of the Constitutional Convention, and President of the United States. This relation between the maxims in his exercise book and his conduct in public life is not surprising, since “civility” shares a linguistic root with “civic” and “city.” The way men behave in polite society is related to how they order society. Politeness is the first form of politics.

There are as many different forms of courtesy as there are forms of society. The manners that prevailed in Virginia as much as in England, at least until the early eighteenth century, were those of an aristocratic society, marked by sharp distinctions. Manners meant the graceful acknowledgment of others across social distances. One of the grand gestures of that system had been performed in 1704 by a Virginia gentleman, Colonel Daniel Parke, a violent and tempestuous man, who was also capable of dignity and grace. Serving in the English army, he carried the news of victory at the Battle of Blenheim to Queen Anne, who offered him a reward of £500. Parke would accept only a miniature portrait of her. Everyone in Virginia at the time knew of this gallantry;

Washington may well have too, since Colonel Parke was the grandfather of Daniel Parke Custis, Martha’s first husband.

Aristocratic manners had an underside: those who sought attention across the social gap, whether for themselves or for some project, had to resort to flattery and hypocrisy to attract royal or noble eyes. Washington certainly knew this, from his own experience in the French and Indian War. In 1757 he tried to press a scheme for frontier defense on the British commander in chief in North America, John Campbell, fourth earl of Loudon. The mode of flattery he employed was to deny that he was flattering. “Do not think, my Lord, that I am going to flatter; notwithstanding I have exalted sentiments of your Lordship’s character and respect your rank, it is not my intention to adulate. My nature is open and honest and free from guile!” The exclamation point underlines the insincerity. (Lord Loudon rejected the advice.)

All modern manners in the Western world were originally aristocratic. “Courtesy” meant behavior appropriate to a court; “chivalry” comes from “chevalier”—a knight. Yet Washington was to dedicate himself to freeing America from a court’s control. Could manners survive the operation? A year and a half into Washington’s presidency, Edmund Burke, reacting to the first insults offered the King and Queen of France by the French Revolution, argued that they could not. “The age of chivalry is gone,” he keened. “Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom.” According to Burke, the only alternative to the proud submission of a Colonel Parke, and the less-than-proud submission of a Colonel Washington, was a society cobbled together by force and self-interest.

The “Rules of Civility” suggested a third option. Without realizing it, the Jesuits who wrote them, and the young man who copied them out, were outlining and absorbing a system of courtesy appropriate to equals and near-equals. “To one that is your equal, or not much your inferior . . .” begins the pantomime about the best bed, which was to be re-enacted by a republican leader almost 200 years later. When the company for whose benefit decent behavior was prescribed expanded to the nation, Washington was ready. Parson Weems got this right when he wrote that it was “no wonder every body honoured *him* who honoured every body.”

STAMPING HIS CHARACTER

WASHINGTON’S morality enjoined him to be courteous; he was goaded to good behavior, and to doing well, by concern for his reputation.

Washington and his contemporaries thought of reputation as a thing that might be destroyed or sullied—some valuable cargo carried in the hold of the self. When Henry Knox wrote

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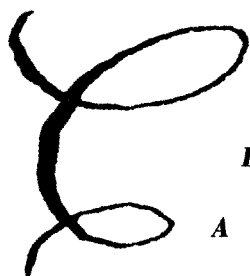
to Lafayette that Washington, in going to the Constitutional Convention, had “committed” his fame “to the mercy of events,” they were like two merchants discussing the risky venture of a third. The cargo was precious because reputation was held to be a true measure of one’s character—indeed, in some sense identical to it. Today we worry about our authenticity—about whether our presentation reflects who we “really” are. Eighteenth-century Americans attended more to the outside story, and were less avid to drive putty knives between the outer and the inner man. Character, as Forrest McDonald has explained, was a role one played until one became it; character also meant how one’s role was judged by others. It was both the performance and the reviews. Every man had a character to maintain; every man was a character actor.

When Washington was appointed Commander in Chief, he explained his acceptance of the job to Martha in exactly these terms: “My Dearest . . . It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my Character

to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself, and

mous proportions, made him invaluable to the supporters of the Constitution, and a bane to its enemies. It also made his support of the Constitution a matter of enormous delicacy to him. When he surrendered his commission, in 1783, he told Congress that it was the “last solemn act of my Official life.” He could return to official life in 1787 only if he could be sure that in doing so he was seen to bow to political necessity. “Inform me confidentially what the public expectation is on this head,” he wrote to Knox two months before the convention, “that is, whether I will, or ought to be there?” Similar concerns attended his decision to accept the presidency, both the first and the second time. Even an act as straightforward as giving a farewell address, he wrote to James Madison in 1792, “may be construed into a manoeuvre to be invited to remain.” There were potential pitfalls wherever the scrupulous bearer of a reputation stepped—none more treacherous than the one pointed out to him by Eliza Powel: that he might acquire a reputation for being obsessed with his reputation. Washington wished to succeed in office, but he needed to avoid dishonor in pursuing success.

Countries, like individuals, have reputations, and Wash-



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given pain to my friends—this I am sure could not, and ought not to be pleasing to you, & must have lessend me considerably in my own esteem.” Washington wanted the job; he had come to Congress wearing his twenty-year-old uniform, by way of dropping a visual hint. But he wanted even more not to fail to do something he ought to do.

Defeat posed a lesser threat to his reputation than dishonor. It was bad enough to lose the Battle of Long Island, in August of 1776; far worse to flee Kip’s Bay in September without making a stand. Two weeks after that debacle Washington wrote from Harlem to Lund Washington, his cousin, that he faced “the impossibility of serving with reputation,” on account of the militia’s incompetence. He warned his cousin not to mention his fears to anyone yet, but added that “if I fall,” the military circumstances should be publicized, “in credit to the justice of my character.” Losing or dying could be extenuated—could, in the right circumstances, be heroic. But dishonor was an inextinguishable blot.

At war’s end Washington’s reputation, swollen to enor-

ington was as concerned for America’s reputation as he was for his own. “We have now a National character to establish,” he wrote when the war was winding down, “and it is of the utmost importance to stamp favorable impressions upon it.”

Courtesy and reputation—the medium and the stimulus of Washington’s morality—operate on and through other people. Courtesy is how you treat them; reputation is what they think of you. The result of Washington’s lifelong concern with courtesy and reputation was that he was able to put the strenuous morals of the noble Romans in a social context, and make *Cato’s* best lines real. “Tis not in mortals to command success, / But *we’ll* do more, Sempronius, *we’ll* deserve it” [emphasis added]. How could deserving Romans justify the plural “we”? On Addison’s own showing, the most deserving Roman of them all affected nothing outside his little band, and died by his own hand. Courtesy and reputation made it possible for a would-be Roman in the North American boondocks to say to his countrymen “we,” and to command a response. ☞

Calligraphic initials and flourish by Jean Evans, derived from the handwriting of George Washington

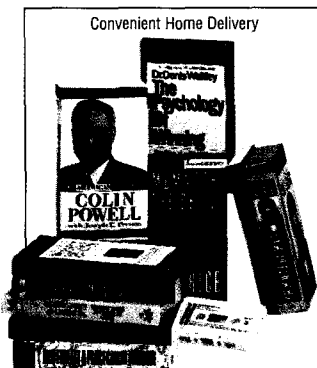
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Mississippi Monte Carlo

by BENJAMIN AND CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



Tunica County, in the Mississippi Delta, has long been among the poorest places in America. But casino gambling is changing Tunica's prospects. The rich Delta soil is sprouting golf courses, and if all goes according to plan, white retirees will soon be moving in. Meanwhile, blacks, Tunica's majority, are not sharing in the boom and are under financial pressure to leave the land that their labor transformed from a vast swamp

TUNICA County, Mississippi, was notorious as the poorest county in the poorest state in the country even before 1985, when Jesse Jackson declared that he had found "America's Ethiopia" there. Life for Tunica's black majority started out hard and got no easier, as statistics from the 1980s testify. The county recorded America's eighth highest infant-mortality rate, the fourth highest percentage of births to teenage mothers,

the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line, and the lowest median household income. In 1984, 70 percent of residents over the age of twenty-five had no high school diploma. Nearly a quarter of the houses lacked modern plumbing. The filthy tin-and-wood shacks that disgusted Jackson rotted along "Sugar Ditch" Alley, named for the open sewer that ran through it. Such infamy inspired a few federal housing projects, but in 1992

the county was still a symbol of rural poverty. Tunica's unemployment levels were among the highest in Mississippi, and many of those who had jobs did not make enough money to get off welfare. That year more than half the county relied on food stamps.

Ten years ago the best that the governor, Bill Allain, could hope for in Tunica was that "a little industry" might "come in there and employ fifty, a hundred, or two hundred people" in minimum-wage



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In the space of three years the Mississippi Delta has sprouted a thriving gambling colony

jobs, but even that seemed highly unlikely. Tunica, on old two-lane Highway 61 at the northern tip of the Mississippi Delta, was so isolated, and its population so miserably educated, that even state monetary incentives and federal tax breaks could not entice business. Despite the sign outside the county seat that declared Tunica A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, many parents who wanted a decent life for their children encouraged them to leave. Waiting for opportunity to come to Tunica was futile.

Or so it seemed. Today there is light in Tunica's future. The highway along which Tunicans once migrated north in search of jobs now glows with billboards and searchlights luring 1.2 million visitors a month into the Delta. At the hamlet of Robinsonville a brand-new four-lane access road under a canopy of sodium lights draws drivers west toward the banks of the Mississippi River, where an Irish castle, a Wild West town, a Tudor mansion, a circus tent, a plantation house, a Hollywood studio, and an enormous western saloon—casinos all—float in a sea of parked cars. Their marquees promise shows by Ray Charles, Johnny Cash, and Tanya Tucker. A few feet from these spangled façades dark acres of cotton and soybeans

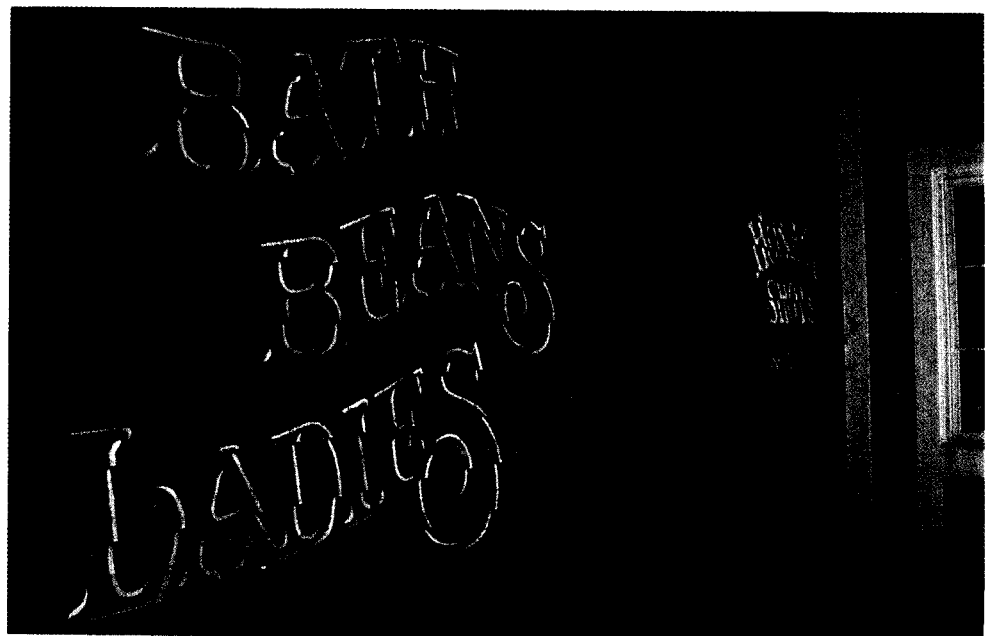
spread under the Delta night, silent except for the bullfrogs and the mosquitoes. Entering the casino lots feels like stepping out of real life.

"Can you believe this?" one woman asks another, as they shuffle forward, waiting at midnight for a table in a casino restaurant. "Right in the middle of the cotton fields," she marvels.

No one dreamed that casino gambling would take off the way it has in Tunica, says Ken Murphree, Tunica County's administrator. But the county that for decades could attract no industry has turned out to be an ideal location for the casino trade.

In part this is because Mississippi is eager to accommodate gaming. The state collects only eight percent of its casinos' revenue—among the lowest tax rates on casino gambling in the country and less than half the rate that neighboring Louisiana assesses. Moreover, Mississippi charges a casino only \$5,000 every two years to renew its license, whereas Louisiana charges \$100,000 every year. While most other states restrict the number of casinos and their concentration, Mississippi models itself on Nevada, the king of the gambling states, granting an unlimited number of licenses and letting the market alone decide which and how many of the fledgling casinos will survive.

They are allowed plenty of leeway to compete. Mississippi's casinos, un-





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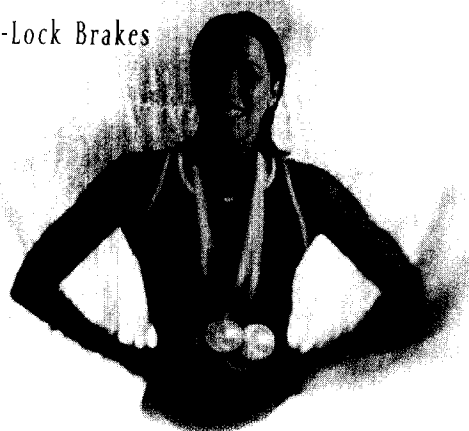
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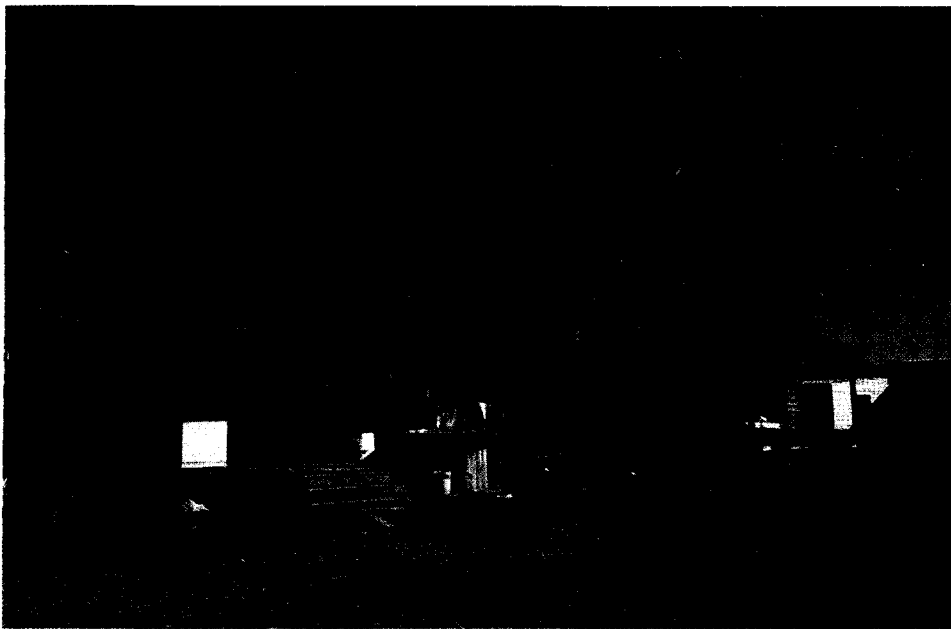
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near the casinos*

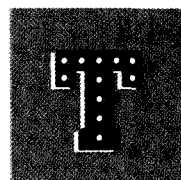
like those in many other states, may devote as much floor space as they please to gambling and may install as many gaming tables and slot machines as they want to fill. While some states try to legislate against gamblers' tendency toward excess by forbidding bets over \$5.00, Mississippi, like New Jersey and Nevada, lets its gamblers play for high stakes.

Ironically, Tunica's poverty helped to determine the county's success as a casino mecca, because it made Tunicans receptive to the notion of legalized gambling. Throughout the nation casinos have mushroomed in areas that have despaired of other sources of income. Tunica fits the pattern. When, in 1990, the state authorized casinos along the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, Tunica was the first county on the river to welcome the industry. "We weren't smarter than other areas," Murphree is fond of saying. "We were more desperate."

**Becoming
a "Destination"**

LUCKILY for Tunica, its neighbor to the north, DeSoto County, was not so desperate. DeSoto, which had prospered as a suburb of Memphis while Tunica languished in the Delta, spurned casinos, establishing Tunica as

the closest gambling venue to Memphis, with its metropolitan area of almost a million people. Memphians' appetite for gambling has proved voracious. When Tunica's first casino, a riverboat named Splash, opened in October of 1992, it was immediately swamped with customers willing to pay a \$10 admission fee and to wait three hours or more to get into the place for a chance to try their luck. Within five weeks the riverboat cleared \$22 million, a huge take even by Las Vegas standards. Splash was a relatively small, locally owned



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operation, but its success attracted the attention of some of the country's largest gambling corporations.

By the end of 1993 such established casino operators as Harrah's, Bally's, and Sheraton had begun to build gaudy palaces in Tunica. They noticed that the county's location had another advantage—one that is obvious when looking at a map of the central United States. People living in West Coast and East Coast cities could be throwing dice in Nevada or Atlantic City after a reasonably short drive or a quick plane trip, but for people in the middle of the country big-casino gambling was out of easy reach. Tunica's boosters and casino owners are changing that. They point out that Interstates 40 and 55 intersect in Memphis, putting Tunica within a day's drive of Oklahoma and Arkansas to the west, Georgia and Tennessee to the east, and Missouri and Indiana to the north. Tunica hopes to become the Las Vegas of the central United States—or, as Splash billed itself, the "Monte Carlo of the Mid-South."

The astonishing growth of gaming in Tunica suggests that this vision may not be a pipe dream. Tunica's first casinos were riverboats, essentially no different from those along the Mississippi River in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and southern Mississippi. Since the big operators have moved in, however, Splash has folded and Lady Luck, Tunica's second casino, has floated south to Coahoma County. The new casinos are permanent structures, clustered in Las Vegas-like strips near the northern Tunica border. Whipped into fierce competition by Mississippi's loose gaming laws, the new establishments are monster casinos, with multiple stories, shops, twenty-four-hour restaurants, and elaborate "themes." Tunica County already has nearly half the casino floor space of Atlantic City. Sam's Town, the biggest casino, boasts eight restaurants, five bars, an ice-cream parlor, and the "area's largest western retail store," and it will soon have an eighteen-hole golf course, shared with the Hollywood casino.

Why We Need A Smaller U.S. Population

And How We Can Achieve It

We need a smaller population in order to halt the destruction of our environment, and to create an economy that will be **sustainable** over the very long term.

We are trying to address our steadily worsening environmental problems without coming to grips with their root cause -- overpopulation.

If present immigration and fertility rates continue, our population, now over 264 million, will pass 400 million by the year 2050 -- and still be growing rapidly!

All efforts to save our environment will ultimately be futile unless we not only halt U.S. population growth, but reverse it, so that our population can eventually be stabilized at a **sustainable** level -- far lower than it is today.

The Optimum U.S. Population Size

The central issue is surely this: **At what size should we seek to stabilize U.S. population?** Unless we know in what direction we should be headed, how can we possibly devise sensible policies to get us there?

The size at which our population is eventually stabilized is supremely important because of the effect of sheer numbers of people on such vitally important national goals as a healthy environment, and a sustainable economy.

We believe these goals can best be achieved with a U.S. population in the range of 125 to 150 million, or about its size in the 1940s. This optimum size could be reached in about three to four generations if we do two things now that are well within our grasp.

How To Get There

1. **Impose restrictions on immigration** that would halt illegal immigration, and cap legal immigration at not over 100,000 per year, including all relatives, refugees and asylees. That alone would sharply slow our growth.

2. **Lower our fertility rate** (the average number of children per woman) from the present 2.0 to around 1.5 and maintain it at that level for several decades. We believe that non-coercive financial incentives will be necessary in order to reach that goal.

If almost all women had no more than two children, our fertility rate would drop to around 1.5, because many women remain childless by choice, or choose to have not more than one child. **We promote the ideal of the two-child maximum family as the social norm, because that is the key to lowering our fertility.**

Incentives to Lower Fertility

NPG proposes these incentives to motivate parents to have no more than two children:

- Eliminate the present Federal income tax exemption for dependent children born after a specified date.
- Give a Federal income tax credit **only** to those parents who have not more than two children. Those with three or more would lose the credit entirely.
- Give an annual cash grant to low income parents who pay little or no income tax, and who have no more than two children. Those with three or more children would lose the cash grant entirely.

Two Vastly Different Paths Lie Before Us

With the reductions in immigration and fertility we advocate, our nation could start **now** on the path toward a sustainable, and prosperous, population of 125 to 150 million.

Without such a program, we are almost certain to continue our mindless, headlong rush down our current path. That path is leading us straight toward catastrophic population levels that can only devastate our environment, and produce universal poverty in a crowded, polluted nation.

To learn more about NPG's recommendations for programs designed to halt, and eventually to reverse, U.S. and world population growth, write today for our **FREE BROCHURE**.

NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization founded in 1972. **We are the only organization that calls for a smaller U.S. and world population, and recommends specific, realistic measures to achieve those goals.**

Negative Population Growth, Inc.

P.O. Box 1206, 210 The Plaza, Suite 7C, Teaneck, NJ 07666

The new casinos have enough money behind them to reach beyond Memphis and tap into the huge Atlanta market. They offer gamblers a \$99 round-trip airfare from Atlanta to Memphis and a shuttle bus from there to Tunica. High rollers get free flights all the way to the tiny Twinkletown Airport, just north of the casinos. Such efforts have paid off: the casinos rake in about \$60 million a month.

After Nevada and New Jersey, Mississippi makes more money from its casinos than any other state, and Tunica's casinos are among the most lucrative in Mississippi. Since 1992 Memphis, Tunica's main source of gamblers, has become the fifth largest casino market in the United States. Investors have plunked down more than a billion dollars in the county to get a piece of the action. Property values around potential development sites have skyrocketed 9,900 percent. Two years ago Tunica had one twelve-room motel; now it has the largest hotel in the state—in fact, the largest hotel “from Atlanta to Dallas and from New Orleans to Opryland,” as local developers like to brag. Once, Tunica's only music venues were juke joints in back alleys and at country crossroads. Today, on the site where the legendary blues musician Robert Johnson was born in a sharecropper's cabin, Donna Summer plays in a 1,600-seat casino auditorium.

Tunica's promoters are pushing for the kind of development that will make the county what they call a “destination.” They dream of theme parks and outlet malls, and point to the sudden rise of the country-music mecca Branson, Missouri, as an example of how a resort can flourish in an unlikely locale if developers provide enough attractions. By far the grandest project in the offing is Diamond Lakes, a proposed resort that includes 4,200 hotel rooms, a forty- to seventy-acre theme park, a 700-slip RV park, two manmade lakes, four theaters, and two eighteen-hole golf courses, for which about \$75 million has so far been invested.

In some ways Tunica has hit the jackpot. Observing the astonishing success of the first casinos, the county, which

gets four percent of casino revenues, hoped eventually to see an increase in its budget from \$2.8 million to \$7 million. In fact by 1995 the county budget had shot up tenfold, to \$28 million. Tunica's poor black population has also benefited from the casinos. Since gambling was legalized, the percentage of county residents receiving food stamps has fallen from more than 50 percent to 37 percent, and the county's collection of child-support payments has jumped from under \$40,000 to between \$60,000 and \$70,000 a month.

Nevertheless, the casinos have not rescued Tunica's poor. Although with eight casinos the county of 8,300 people now has more jobs than residents, most of those jobs, particularly the better-paying ones, have gone to people from outside the county. And whereas boosters claim that the casinos have dramatically reduced unemployment, in fact the average unemployment rate for October of 1994 through September of 1995 was 14.5 percent—only slightly lower than the average rate of 15.1 percent for 1991, the year before the first casino opened. Last September unemployment was 13.6 percent, about twice the average rate in Mississippi as a whole. Only three of the state's eighty-two counties now suffer greater unemployment than Tunica. In the face of persistent unemployment, those who are well-off continue to insist that “there is a job for everyone who wants one”; but their emphasis has begun to fall on the second clause, so that an observation that once seemed to express relief and celebration now suggests exasperation and disgust. One woman we talked to expressed this bluntly, complaining, “You could put a factory in some people's back yard and they still wouldn't work.”

Derrick Crawford, the county's director of human services, finds this view unfair. He points out that one kind of employer cannot possibly suit every potential employee, and that for religious reasons alone many of Tunica's blacks would rather be unemployed than work in a casino. Still, like many others, he ultimately lays the blame on what is most often called the “lack of work ethic”—meaning that many Tun-

cans make poor employees because they haven't been conditioned to take a job seriously. People hint that those who are continually out of work are in that situation because they come to work late, take unauthorized days off, or even quit on a whim. Crawford and others see Tunica's history of unemployment as responsible for this behavior. “If you're twenty-six or twenty-seven and never had a job,” Crawford says, “nothing has taught you how to work.”

In 1989 the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, chaired by Bill Clinton as the governor of Arkansas, issued a more sweeping statement about the limitations that cripple the black population in Tunica and other Delta communities: “By any objective economic, educational or social measurement, the . . . people in the Delta region are the least prepared to participate in and contribute to the nation's effort to succeed in the world economy.” Most Tunicans are simply unable to take advantage of the new opportunities that the casinos have brought to their doorstep.

The disparity between the way most Americans live and the way the majority of black Tunicans live defies belief. With the exception of crack cocaine and, now, the casinos, little of modern America has penetrated Tunica County; far from participating in the American dream, most of Tunica's black population is excluded from even the mundane aspects of American life.

“This is a different world,” Dorothy Rhea, a waitress at one of the casinos, says, describing the sensation of coming to Tunica from Memphis. To explain what she means, she tells a story of working with a new waitress, a young black woman from Tunica. “She's holding out a plate of bacon,” Rhea says of the other woman, “and she keeps asking me, ‘Is this toast? I need toast. Is this toast?’” The woman was not being sarcastic, Rhea explains. “She really didn't know what toast was.”

But the county's problems are even more complex than its grim statistics and such examples of isolation from America's mainstream would suggest. “Race,” as one woman told us, “is at the heart of everything here in Tunica.”

Blatant Separation

NOT everyone is poor in what has sometimes been known as the poorest county in America. Pointing out the big landowners, Tunicans often claim that the county is home to more than thirty millionaires. Perhaps more important, Tunica, unlike most rural counties in the South, has almost no poor whites. In fact, in the county seat, the town of Tunica, which is 74 percent white, the county's reputation for poverty is difficult to credit. The wide main street is lined with a few basic shops—a hardware store, a drug-

blacks live in North Tunica, better known as the "sub" (short for "subdivision"), an unincorporated area adjacent to the county seat. There is some federally subsidized housing in the sub—small, neat brick ranch houses, trailers, and an apartment complex that looks like a barracks. And there are many houses that might more accurately be called shacks. No white people live in North Tunica, and the town has no desire to annex it.

The physical separation of the races in Tunica is not so surprising in itself. After all, few places exist in America where separation does not occur. What

yard, and in front of a third house a woman maneuvered her sit-down mower carefully around a tree.

The street just around the corner was lively. Along this quarter-mile stretch stands a featureless single-story cinder-block rectangle divided into tiny apartments, and a handful of shacks, their porches balanced on cinder blocks, the wood of their walls bare and weathered gray, their corrugated-tin roofs rusted. The postage-stamp yards in front of these homes are packed dirt and stones,

Main street in Tunica, the county seat



store, two banks—and is refreshingly free of links from any fast-food chain. An old-fashioned brick courthouse stands in the middle of town. Some of the houses in the most visible neighborhood are modest, though solid and well tended, but most are substantial, and a few might be called mansions. All sit back from the street on large, leafy lots.

To be poor in Tunica County is to be black. Most blacks live outside the town limits—the county as a whole is 74 percent black and only 26 percent white, the reverse of the town. Many

seems unusual to the outsider is that the two groups are so close to each other—just across the street in many cases—and yet so unambiguously apart. Robinsonville, the crossroads hamlet closest to the casinos, demonstrates this pattern in miniature. A quarter-mile stretch of street is serene, lined with gracious houses, their walls of freshly painted wood or ivy-covered brick, skirted by green lawns and shaded under arching trees. Last Fourth of July the driveway alongside one of them was packed with BMWs and Cherokees. A child's voice piped occasionally from another back

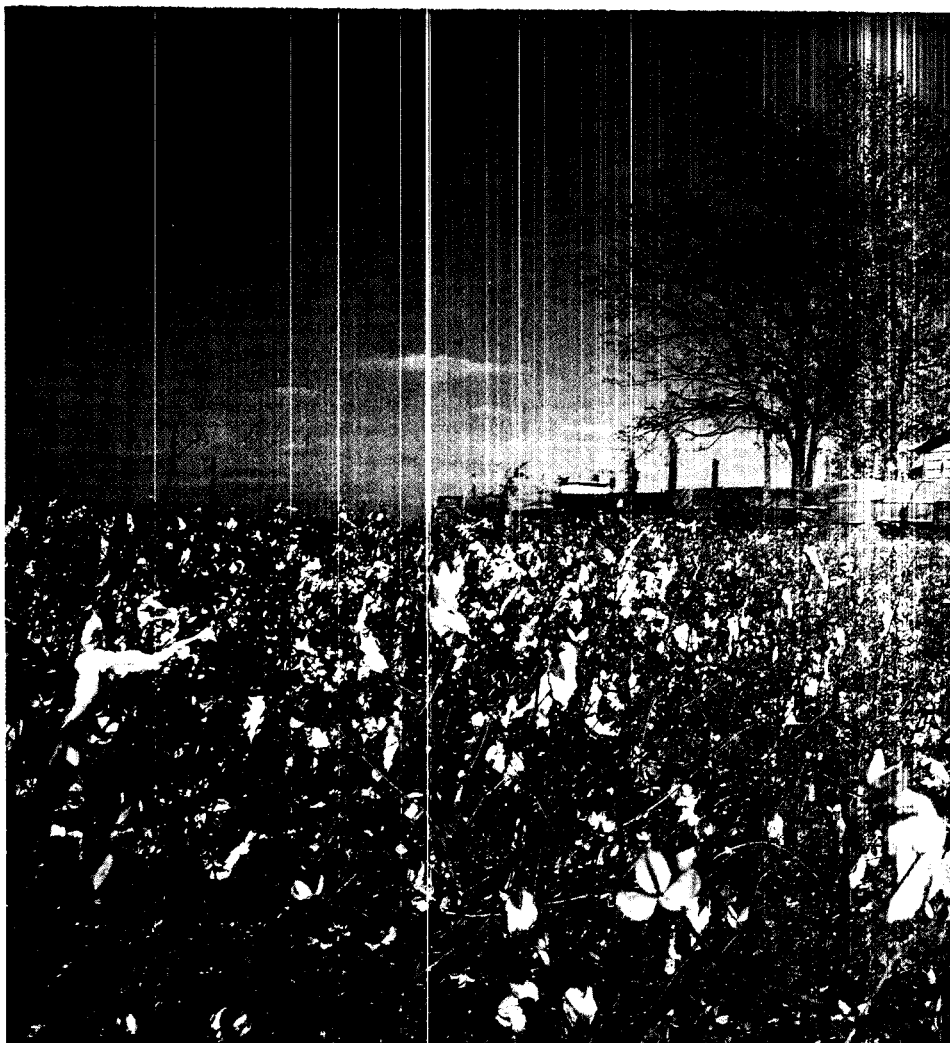
and on the Fourth vans and old American luxury cars were parked in and around them. Music was blasting, and a couple of the porches were crowded. Cars and pickup trucks rambled down the street, paused while someone leaned in the window for a while, and then turned around and rambled up the street again. The two streets together make up almost the whole of Robinsonville, but they seem to belong to completely different worlds.

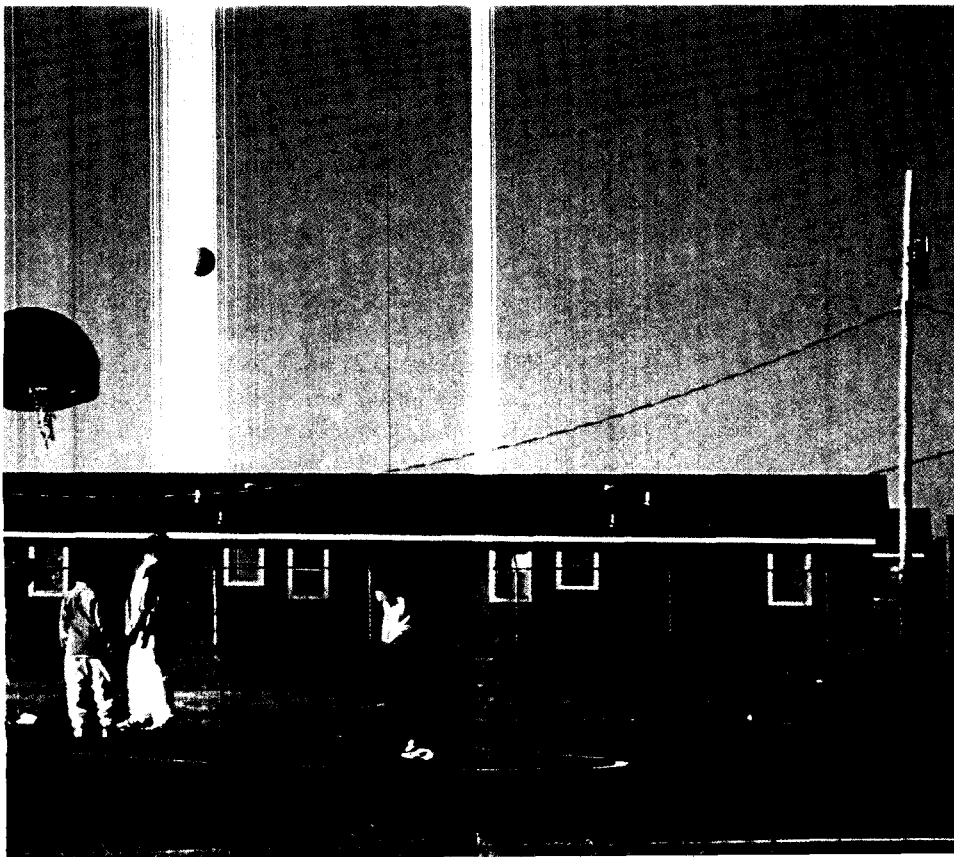
The blatant separation of the races in Tunica's schools shocks an outsider even more than the county's housing

pattern, and neither blacks nor whites seem to object to this separation, which is most shocking of all. With few exceptions, Tunica's white children attend the private, all-white Tunica Institute of Learning. White churches reportedly raise funds to help the small number of white families who otherwise could not pay the tuition. Tunica's black children go to the public schools. Last year only one white student attended Rosa Fort, the public high school. Significantly, he was not from Tunica; his family had just moved into the county from California.

Certainly Tunica has changed radically since the 1940s, when the county sheriff accused the folklorist Alan Lomax of being a foreign spy because he violated the county's racial code. Lomax was detained because he interviewed the blues musician Son House, a black man, without permission from the planter for whom House worked, because he referred to House with the honorific "Mister," and because the sheriff suspected that Lomax had shaken House's hand. Today the sheriff of Tunica County is black. But while Tunicans now eschew the virulent racism of the past, the attitude that fueled the old behavior—what scholars generally agree comes down to a fear of miscegenation—has merely been tempered, not eradicated. The principal of Rosa Fort, Willie Dismuke, who is black, is surprisingly offhand, for instance, when he mentions that fear of interracial dating is at the heart of the separation between the schools. A racial code still dictates relations between whites and blacks in Tunica, constricting both groups. As Sister Gus Griffin, of Catholic Social Services, a social-service organization in Tunica, observes, "I think in the social structure of Tunica white people would be ostracized if they sent their kids to Rosa Fort. Whites are in line too. They're not free."

Race relations influence Tunica's response to its new wealth, and in this way the county's plans for its future are the inevitable flowering of its history. Tunica has shared that history, for the most part, with the rest of the Mississippi Delta.





"The Most Southern Place on Earth"

IN defining the boundaries of what he regarded as a distinct region, the writer David Cohn famously remarked in 1935 that the Mississippi Delta "begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and ends on Catfish Row in Vicksburg." In fact the Delta begins twenty-eight miles south of the Peabody, just north of the Tunica County border, where the hills abruptly end and Highway 61 descends into a land that unrolls as flat as a floor to the horizon. And "the Delta" is not really a delta but an alluvial plain 200 miles long and seventy miles wide at its widest, across which the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers flooded and receded for millennia, depositing their riches, until the Delta became, as Cohn described it, "pure soil endlessly deep, dark, and sweet." It is probably the richest soil in the world. In the 1820s, when the first planters became aware of the Delta's agricultural potential, it was a swampy wilderness, choked with vegetation, where panthers and water moccasins lurked—"a seething lush hell," as one eighteenth-century scholar described it.

The historian James C. Cobb, perhaps the leading authority on the region, has called the Mississippi Delta "the most southern place on earth." Its history is the history of the South at its most extreme. From the start the Delta presented an opportunity for high-stakes gambling. The soil promised quick riches in cotton, but those who tried to win them risked cholera, malaria, and typhoid fever, and climatic extremes ranging from drought to floods to frost. Those whose bodies survived the diseases and whose crops survived the weather could see the whole endeavor come to nothing in the fickle cotton market. Such a gamble attracted wealthy landowners from the East whose plantations were wearing out and who could afford the enormous investment in cash and slaves necessary to clear and drain

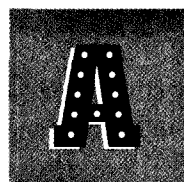
*Tunica County cotton fields
(above) and a housing project
in "Sugar Ditch" Alley*

and cultivate the land. Producing a profitable cotton crop in the Delta required physical labor above all. By 1850 the slaves on whom the planters depended for this labor outnumbered whites in the most developed area of the Delta by more than fourteen to one.

Black men and women transformed the Delta. As Cohn explained, without the African-American there would be no Delta as we know it today.

The Negro's identification with the life of the Delta is fundamental and complete. . . . It was he who brought order out of a primeval wilderness, felling the trees, digging the ditches and draining the swamps. The vast rampart on the levees upon whose existence the life of the Delta depends sprang from the sweat and brawn of the Negro. Wherever one looks in this land, whatever one sees that is the work of man, was erected by the toiling, straining bodies of the blacks.

With its grueling, year-round work, malarial swamps, and planter class frantic to see its gamble pay off, the Mississippi Delta was perhaps the worst place in America to be a slave. Being "sold down the river" to the Delta quickly developed a reputation as a death sentence. At the other extreme the members of the Delta's white elite, freely



AFTER NEVADA AND NEW JERSEY, MISSISSIPPI MAKES MORE MONEY FROM ITS CASINOS THAN ANY OTHER STATE, AND TUNICA'S CASINOS ARE AMONG THE MOST LUCRATIVE IN MISSISSIPPI.

spending their profits in dissipation and ostentation, soon became known for their pursuit of the good life. Poor and middle-class whites had no place in this plantation economy. "By the middle of the nineteenth century," Cobb writes, "the Delta had already assumed an enduring identity as a region where a wealthy, pleasure-seeking, and status-conscious white elite exploited the labor of a large and thoroughly subjugated black majority."

Long after the Civil War whites remained convinced that their success depended on the Delta's being a place

where their interests, solely because of their race, always came first. As one Tunica County planter told a sharecropper early in this century, "This is a place for me to make a profit, not you."

However subjugated, blacks were essential in the Delta, since the cotton plantations continued to require a large labor force. Delta whites thus had to coexist with a group they feared but on whom they depended, and this, along with a bedrock of racial animosity, underlay the relationship between the races for decades. Beginning in the late 1940s, when cotton production was mechanized, eliminating the need for most agricultural labor, this relationship changed fundamentally. "By the end of the 1960s," Cobb maintains, "Delta blacks [were] largely superfluous to the economic interests of Delta whites"—a situation that largely defines race relations in the Delta today.

Although mechanization spurred a huge black migration to the North—part of the largest population movement in American history—African-Americans still make up nearly 70 percent of the Delta's population. The paramount problem in Tunica, from the point of view of many whites, is what to do with this group that stayed behind—a black majority disproportionately unemployed, dependent, and miserably educated, a population that many whites regard as dross. In fact, the wish of some whites, one white woman from Tunica whispered to us recently, "is for [black people] to go away," leaving Tunica for the whites. For both political and economic reasons, this has been true since mechanization. The black population, for its part, seems pretty well convinced that its fortunes in Tunica will never change. This resignation gives rise to a resentful passivity, which the white population perceives as an unwillingness or inability on the part of blacks to improve their situation. The behavior of each side thus confirms the worst suspicions of the other.

A home in one of Tunica's white neighborhoods



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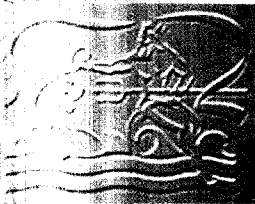
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Prosperity for Some

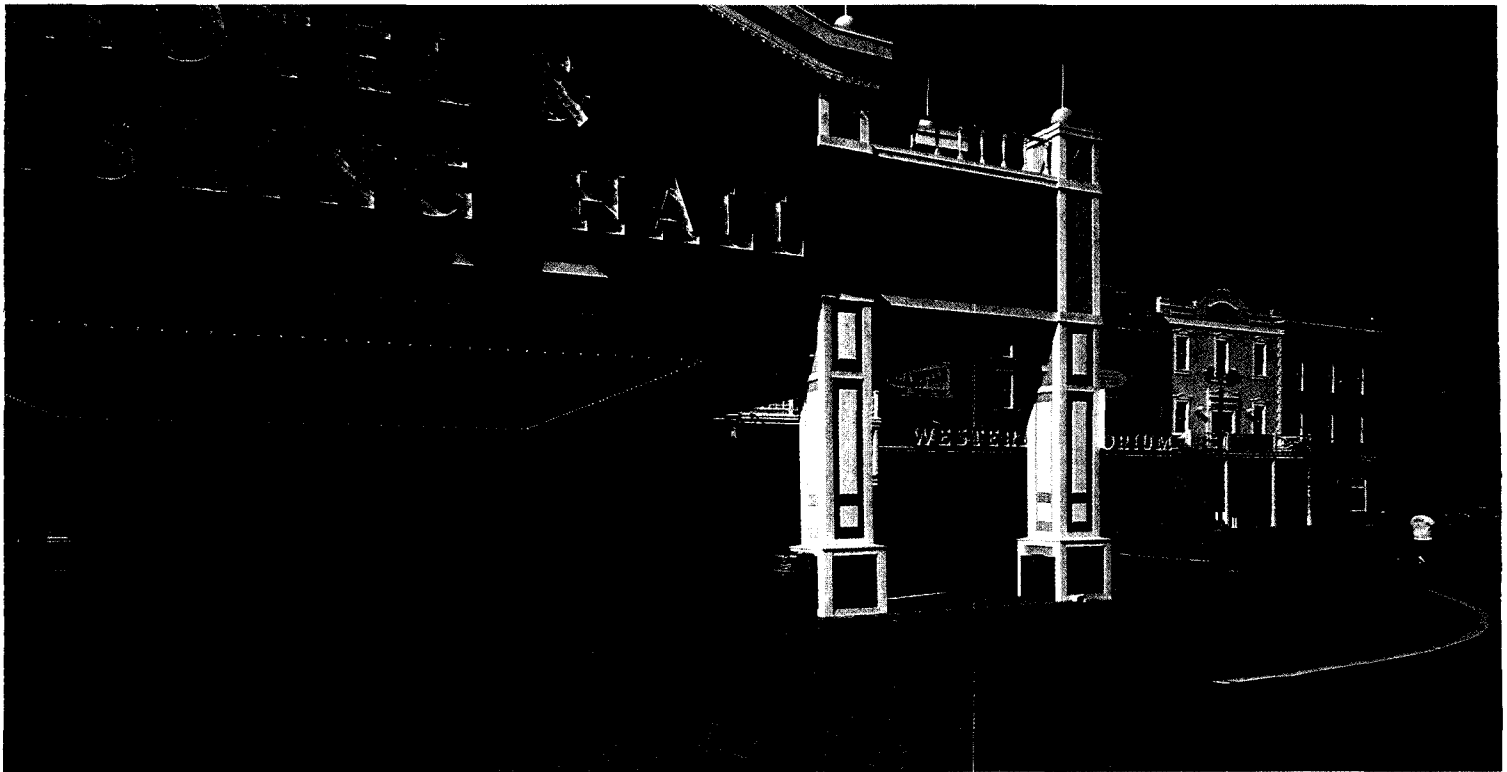
TUNICA is really two communities, deeply divided by race and wealth, and the economic boom that was at first greeted as a universal good has in many ways exacerbated the county's division. Blacks believe that even if casino revenues prove to be a rising tide that lifts all boats, it still won't lift them out of their subordinate position. Some blacks fear that Tunica's new prosperity might make their place in the county even more marginal.

Whereas legalized gambling is the most recent in a series of attempts to

image as a center for recreation and leisure. His wife, Connie Murphree, points out that Tunica's quiet rural atmosphere would make it a haven for those who want to escape urban problems. If the casinos succeed, and the leisure industry develops as its boosters hope, the county will attract young couples wanting to work and retirees ready to play, and will house them in new condominiums and planned communities. Eventually Tunica will attract middle-class families with jobs in Memphis who want a better house on more land than they can afford in the city, and the county, with what its pro-

remains substandard. As Clifford Cox, the director of Tunica Habitat for Humanity, observed over coffee last summer, "This county is so dollar-signs-in-the-eyes that they're not looking at the small community—the citizens that are already here. They're concentrating on how to bring people in."

Tunica's transformation seems to be off to a good start. One of the county's largest landowners has joined with developers from Memphis to build a planned community in Robinsonville, near the casinos. But some of Tunica's blacks worry that the closer the county's leaders come to realizing their vision,



The entrance to Sam's Town, the largest casino

bring industry to the area, historically such efforts have been designed to retain and increase the minority white population rather than to create employment for blacks. Many of Tunica's whites, it seems, see casino gambling as a means to transform Tunica into a white middle-class exurb of Memphis.

Ken Murphree, the county administrator, talks hopefully about golf courses, factory-outlet malls, and retirement communities to solidify Tunica's new

motors call a "nice little Southern town" at its core, will prosper as a bedroom community for Memphis and a retirement center for the mid-South.

Tunica's blacks are conspicuously absent from this vision. In fact, it's impossible to reconcile the existence of a majority population that is still desperately poor and difficult to employ with this idea of what Tunica's boosters would like the county to become. Already, with the rise in land values, those who are ill equipped to take advantage of Tunica's new opportunities are seeing their rents skyrocket while their housing

the more marginalized the black population will become. Although an influx of families with good incomes would seem to be a boon to the county's educational system, for instance, Willie Dismuke, the high school principal, assumes that such growth will ultimately result in two public schools, one for affluent white newcomers, one for poor black Tunica natives. (Indeed, a new elementary school to serve the anticipated population boom in the Robinsonville area is now under consideration.) Whether or not events prove Dismuke right, his assumption that Tunica will steadfastly re-

main two communities even if the county's economy and population change radically shows a striking lack of confidence in Tunica's ability or willingness to allow race relations to change.

"This Is Our Home"

FROM the time when public schooling for Tunica's blacks meant one-room schoolhouses on the plantations, where education was limited by the demands of the cotton crop and stopped at eighth grade; through the period 1952–1970, when the schoolhouses were closed and blacks and whites attended separate and unequal elementary and high schools; through desegregation, when the white community abruptly and en masse abandoned Tunica's public schools, the county's educational system has epitomized its racial divide. Today the debate over how much of Tunica's new wealth should be spent on public education brings the county's racial division to a head.

To the county board of supervisors, which is 60 percent white, investing in Tunica means building infrastructure to support the casinos and to attract more business. (The board has also been pleased to cut property taxes by 50 percent, thanks to the county's new casino-generated income.) This may seem like a reasonable course for developing the county, but it neglects the most obvious obstacle to the economic progress of Tunica's majority.

Mississippi's public schools are considered the worst in the nation, and Tunica's school system is among the worst in Mississippi. Tunica's school district ranked 152 out of 153 in a statewide literacy exam in 1995, and its students have consistently tested so poorly on various achievement exams that the Mississippi Department of Education has placed the district on probation for seven of the past eight years. Although the casinos have tried to hire Tunicans as often as possible, if only for the sake of good public relations, they have found most blacks from Tunica to be unprepared for all but the most menial positions. Illiteracy plagues

the black population, and many of Tunica's blacks lack the math skills not only to be dealers but, according to the casinos, even to make change.

Improving Tunica's abysmal public education would seem to be an obvious first step in any effort to better the lives of its citizens and strengthen the county's economic prospects overall, but originally the supervisors were not going to allot any of the county's take to the public schools. And although in many places public education unites parents of different races and economic levels, in Tunica the coalition of community activists and teachers that hired a lawyer to get the county to allocate casino revenues to the schools was entirely black.

In response to the black community's continuing demands that the county devote more money to education, many in the white community maintain that the schools' problems do not stem from a lack of funds. They suggest that the Tunica school district has for years spent more per pupil than the average Mississippi school district. In 1986, however, Tunica ranked 142 out of 154 in per-pupil spending. Today, largely thanks to state and federal money, Tunica does indeed spend more than the Mississippi average on its pupils, but to argue that the amount is adequate seems somewhat disingenuous, since far more than average expenditure would be required to offset the extreme disadvantages under which Tunica's black students labor. Certainly whites in Tunica need not have bad intentions to believe that the windfall from the casinos is better spent on infrastructure, but their motives are automatically suspect whenever a decision involves the public schools, because they long ago forsook that institution. It is no doubt galling to many blacks in Tunica that whites make choices about schools they didn't attend and to which they don't send their children, and equally galling to many whites that they must help support schools they don't use.

Perhaps most frustrating for the black population is that Tunica does not seem eager to make a place for even those blacks who have been able to take ad-

vantage of the new opportunities the casinos have presented to improve their lives. Some black Tunicans have managed to earn enough money working in the casinos to get themselves off welfare. Now they would like to buy houses in the community where their families have lived for generations. Whereas it would seem that these are just the sort of citizens that Tunica might like to keep, the county is in fact offering them little reward for their efforts. Few low-cost, decent houses are available in Tunica, and there seems to be some effort to keep things that way. Perceiving a new market, Bob Hall, a local developer, is trying to build houses that those blacks who are now steadily employed can afford with a Federal Housing Administration loan, and he blames the town's planning commission for trying to stall him. According to Hall, who is white, people argue that they don't want "that kind of housing," which he translates to mean that they don't want "any more houses for black people to live in."

Although Sister Gus Griffin concedes that the white community has become more willing than it was in the past to permit changes that will help the black population, she nevertheless believes that whites on the whole are unlikely "to do anything to make it easier for African-Americans to live in Tunica." Surprisingly, however, given this atmosphere, even those blacks who now have the means to leave Tunica want to stay. A love for the place is one of the few things blacks and whites share in Tunica. Reflecting the views of many in the black community, Freddie Brandon, a board member of a Tunica housing-assistance organization, asserted during a conversation last fall, "This is our home; we're not going anywhere."

A White Exurb?

IT remains to be seen whether Tunica's gamble on casinos will pay off in the long run. County officials and the Chamber of Commerce eye neighboring states and counties nervously, fearing that if Memphis, for instance, decides to throw its doors open to casinos, a substantial number of Tunica's

gamblers will drift away. The next year, according to developers and local officials, is crucial: if no competing market emerges in that time, Tunica will be so well established as a gaming mecca that future competition will pose little threat. If all goes well, by early 1997 the county will have consolidated its position, reassuring still more developers that Tunica is a safe investment and encouraging them to sink their money into the rich Delta soil.

Whatever their future, the casinos are booming in Tunica now, and although, located seven miles from the county seat, they have not yet penetrated Tunica's core, they are certainly edging the county into modern America. Dinner out in Tunica used to mean fried catfish or chitterlings at the Blue and White, which caters mostly to whites, or Vada's Diner, which caters mostly to blacks. Now a Tunican need only drive to the Circus Circus casino to order cioppino and tiramisu. More important, the casinos are happy to take everybody's money. "We love to go out to eat out there," Sister Gus says, "to see people of both races sitting down in the same room." As employers, too, the casinos are potentially a progressive force that could push Tunica out of its well-worn groove. They are a source of wealth and opportunity beyond the control of the traditional economic and political powers in the county. And with no interest in anything but turning a profit, they have no stake in maintaining Tunica's caste system.

If the casinos succeed in jarring the county out of decades of economic and social stagnation, Tunica will have an opportunity far more profound than anyone could have imagined just three years ago: it will have the means to remake itself. If it so chooses, Tunica can use its new resources to prepare its people to take advantage of the chance afforded by the casinos. The county can define its needs as the needs of the majority of its citizens. But if it is true, as one longtime white Tunica resident asserts, echoing an oft-repeated observation, that whites "want things to stay the same; they don't want blacks to get ahead," it is unlikely, to say the least, that Tunica will make this choice. Even

if there are many exceptions to this dismal assessment, focusing on changing the lives of the county's poor would mean sacrificing the strides the county could make were it not hampered by this population—sacrificing, in other words, the vision of Tunica as a prosperous white exurb.

To arrive at a thriving exurb of golf courses and retirement condos, those who would re-create the county must essentially see Tunica as a blank canvas. Then they can decide how best to work with the medium they have been given—the casinos—to bring the place (although not necessarily its population) to its fullest potential. Ironically, the economic tide that should be bringing black Tunicans into the mainstream may instead allow white Tunica to push them even further into the backwater, while white Tunicans chase their dream of a prosperous rural southern town—essentially what the town of Tunica would be today if the black areas at its edges could be ignored.

As prosperous people move into Tunica, for instance, they will dilute the force of poverty there by making what is now a poor black majority—with potential, if not actual, political power—an underclass minority. This population will decrease not only in relative size but also in absolute number, as those who cannot take advantage of the new economic opportunities are displaced by the rising rents that accompany prosperity. So although the casinos help to alleviate the county's poverty, they are also a means by which the middle class can distance itself from the poor in Tunica, as it has in much of the rest of the United States.

If rising costs pressure the black poor and they find Tunica uncomfortable, they can always go to Memphis, as some whites have suggested in exasperation. Such a "solution" is hardly original. In moving out, Tunica's blacks would, from the point of view of the white community, be following the pattern of black migration that occurred earlier in this century, leaving the county because they are not economically useful there. Moreover, Memphis has an inner city populated by impover-

ished blacks, so white Tunicans fall in line with the rest of the country when they identify the ghetto as the place where poor blacks belong.

"Solving" problems by turning one's back on them has long been the American way. It is in some sense the flip side of pursuing opportunity. This attitude brought much of America's population here in the first place. It was also the way of those who abandoned their worn-out, useless land and settled the Delta. It is often a way to better oneself, to get ahead, but it becomes a different matter when those who are turning their backs equate the problem they are escaping with people. It is one thing to abandon land when it has outlived its economic usefulness, and another to abandon a population.

Because the county has maintained such a distance between the races, white Tunica can disassociate itself from the county's problems by equating them with the black population—much the way whites in Los Angeles, say, view their city's impoverished minorities as a foreign presence imposed on the place, depressing its economy and culture. Such an attitude, ungenerous everywhere, is especially misguided in Tunica, where blacks have been a majority since the Delta was settled. In fact, if either group can claim more credit for making the Delta prosper, it is the African-Americans. If they belong anywhere, they belong in a place that they built, sharing in its prosperity.

Those who believe and can behave as if the fates of blacks and whites in Tunica are not bound together are fooling themselves. In explaining how the white southerner is defined by the African-American, despite the separation of the races, William Styron has written, "In the South [the African-American] is a perpetual and immutable part of history itself, a piece of the vast fabric so integral and necessary that without him the fabric dissolves." Much as they might wish and work to do so, it is more than a century too late for whites and blacks in the Delta, "the most southern place on earth," to divorce themselves from one another without losing an integral part of themselves. ☛

TWO POEMS

by JANE KENYON

DRAWING FROM THE PAST

Only Mama and I were at home.
We ate tomato sandwiches
with sweeps of mayonnaise
on indifferent white bread.

Surely it was September,
my older brother at school.
The tomatoes were fragrant
and richly red, perhaps the last
before frost.

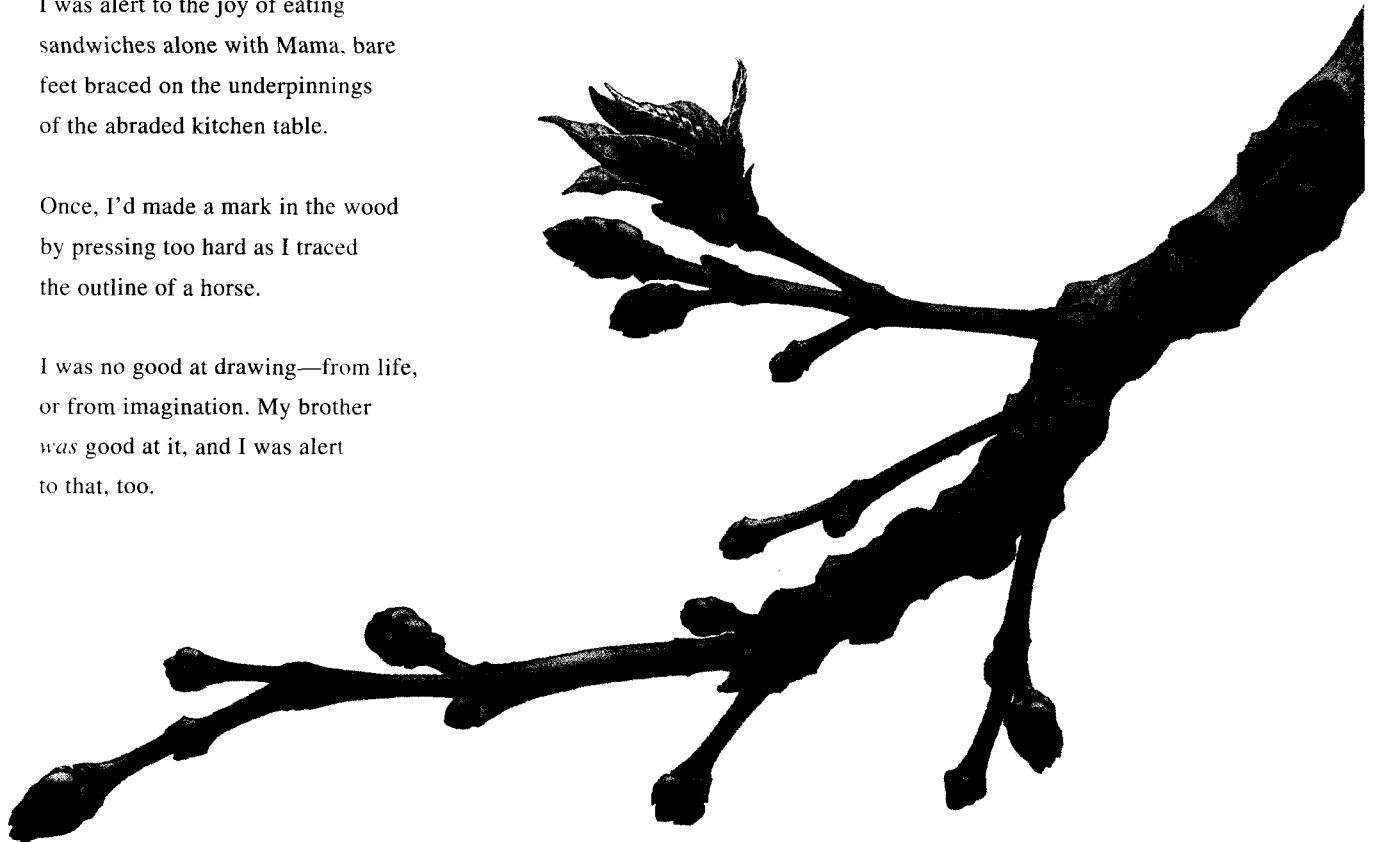
I was alert to the joy of eating
sandwiches alone with Mama, bare
feet braced on the underpinnings
of the abraded kitchen table.

Once, I'd made a mark in the wood
by pressing too hard as I traced
the outline of a horse.

I was no good at drawing—from life,
or from imagination. My brother
was good at it, and I was alert
to that, too.

SURPRISE

He suggests pancakes at the local diner,
followed by a walk in search of mayflowers,
while friends convene at the house
bearing casseroles and a cake, their cars
pulled close along the sandy shoulders
of the road, where tender ferns unfurl
in the ditches, and this year's budding leaves
push last year's spectral leaves from the tips
of the twigs of the ash trees. The gathering
itself is not what astounds her, but the casual
accomplishment with which he has lied.





The Favor

by ROXANA ROBINSON

LRIVING back to his mother's house from the tennis courts, Roger rounded a slow curve just past the golf course and saw a woman at the side of the road. She was standing at the end of the sandy lane that led to the club beach. Against the Caribbean sun she wore a turban and a terry-cloth robe. Her legs were white and stalky, and on her feet were plastic bathing sandals. As the car approached, her hand fluttered up, undecided: not exactly a flag, but dif-

"I have never heard that story," Roger said severely. "And frankly, Mrs. Harrison, I have a hard time believing it." He stood up to leave. He was dismissing her, her ridiculous story, her ridiculous getup

ferent from a wave. Roger stopped the car, and she came over, taking tiny steps across the hot sand. "Well, I suppose you're in a *terrible* hurry," she said. Roger shook his head.

"Not at all," he said politely. "What's the problem?" Roger was forty-eight. He had hazel eyes and a narrow face. His cheeks were lined and his forehead was high; perhaps his hair was beginning to recede.

"Well, my *car* has broken down, you see," the woman

said. She talked very quickly, with an old-fashioned accent: “cah” for “car.” Her sentences had an outraged lilt, as though it were a scandal that she had to say any of this at all. “I came over for a *swim*, and now it won’t start, don’t you see, and I have to get back home somehow.”

Roger leaned across the empty passenger seat and opened the door for her. “Here, climb in,” he said. “Where do you live?”

The woman pointed back the way Roger had come. “Parakeet Peak,” she said.

It was just past noon, blazing hot. Beyond the scrubby trees the sun was reflected by the ocean, and its light was sent back up into the shimmering air. Settling herself into her seat, the woman now took a good look at Roger.

“Aren’t you a Pickering?” she asked accusingly, as though he were trying to sneak his family past her.

“Roger Conrad. Hello,” he said, giving her a grave nod as he backed the car and turned it around.

“Oh, you’re Roger *Conrad*,” the woman said. “I used to know your father.” She pronounced it “fahthah.”

“Did you,” Roger said, pulling back out onto the road. “Now, where is it again that you’d like to go?”

“Parakeet Peak!” the woman said, surprised that Roger had already forgotten.

“And just where is that, exactly?” Roger asked.

“Oh, it’s way back in, near the Janeways,” the woman said, waving her hand in a long-distance gesture.

Roger started back toward the clubhouse. The road here ran along the wide white beach, edged with a line of palms. The trees leaned haphazardly toward one another, scattering shaggy leaves on the fine sand. Across the road the golf course rolled its smooth gray-green mat along the rising slopes. Beyond the golf course were low inland hills covered with wild green scrub. A few isolated houses were scattered along the crests and ridges. The island was very dry, and next to each house was a whitish open patch—a concrete catchment for rainwater.

The club owned a thousand acres in the southeast corner of the island. Except for the shorefront and the tennis courts and golf course, the club land was uncleared and covered with dense scrub. Most of the rest of the big island was open. In the interior, where sugarcane once grew, brown cattle grazed across broad, peaceful fields of pale grass.

Roger’s parents had chosen this place, years ago, for its clean white beaches, the low, pretty houses, the golf, and their kind friends. When Roger was little, the family had come here every winter. He remembered those times as green, warm, easy. The life of the island was brilliant and foreign to him: the hot, spiky growth; the dry, swift lizards; the black, black people, with their loose, bright clothes and syncopated speech. Roger and his younger brother, Steven, had spent their days outside, on their bikes or snorkeling in the washes around the small coral islands. Paddling slowly through the lucid surges, powered magically by his limber

flipped feet, his breathing loud and hollow in his ears, Roger felt privileged to be in this exotic place. Following the silvery underwater life, the schools of wary fish shifting and glittering before him, he felt like a fortunate traveler from another planet.

In those days the weather was steady, the sun benign, the rains brief. In the evenings his parents went out to parties on wide stone terraces. His mother wore flowered dresses, a white sweater over her smooth brown shoulders.

Roger had not been back in nearly twenty years, but the place seemed not to have changed. The original premise of the club was simplicity—the houses were modest, with no telephones. A few new ones stood now, but still no one had a telephone. The club was just the same: a cluster of low stucco buildings, clean, freshly painted, set into the bluff above the long, perfect crescent of the beach. Vigorous foursomes in bright clothes moved across the golf course in the dazzling sun. In the evenings they sat in the club dining room, with its high thatched ceilings and polished stone floors. Roger’s mother waved and smiled at her friends: women in flowered dresses, with white earrings and necklaces—women who looked like her. They were with pink-faced men in colored trousers, men who looked like Roger’s father. The scene seemed just as Roger remembered: gentle, pleasant, protected.

Roger drove slowly. The narrow club roads were made of uneven concrete slabs. On the inland side the brush was hacked short for a scant yard, beyond which was heavy tropical growth, spiky-leaved and hostile. As the car came around a corner, a honey-colored mongoose, soft and bright-eyed, raised his head and then wiggled into invisibility among the gray-green leaves.

“I have to get back, you know, because I have to meet the architect. *And* the decorator.” The woman shook her head. “It’s so *difficult* to get things done down here. Of course, I haven’t been here for five years. It’s up along here on the right.”

Roger turned inland and started up the long spine of the hill. This road was one he did not know, though he and Steven had biked around most of these narrow lanes. His family had stayed at the clubhouse in those early years, before they built their house.

“I’m at the top of the hill,” the woman said. “The highest point on the island. You can see the sun rise and set from our house. I joined this club forty-five years ago, but I didn’t buy a house until years later. I wanted this one, and I waited until it came on the market. Wiggy Newcombe called me up and said, ‘Cynthia, your house is for sale.’ I couldn’t believe it.” She looked at Roger expectantly. “Didn’t your father join about the same time we did?”

“And my mother,” Roger said, nodding. “That sounds right.”

“I used to know him well.”

“Ah,” Roger said. This seemed unlikely, a woman like her.

“I knew your mother, too, but not as well. She wasn’t a golfer. Your father was a golfer.” She said it “golfah.”

"He was," Roger said.

"But your mother wasn't a golfer, was she?"

"She plays golf," Roger said.

"I don't remember it," the woman said flatly. "Are they down here, your parents? Is that where you're staying?"

"My mother is here," Roger said. "My father died last summer."

"Oh, I'm *sorry* to hear that," the woman said, turning in her seat to look at him. "Oh, I'm *terribly* sorry to hear that. Your father was *such* an attractive man. A *terribly* attractive man."

"He was," Roger said.

"Give your mother my sympathy, would you? I don't know that she'll remember me. Cynthia Harrison. I used to see her here at parties. Tell her I'm terribly sorry about your father. I'd love to see her," she went on, unconvincingly. "Will she be here long?"

"We're leaving tomorrow, actually," Roger said.

"Tomorrow—oh, that's too bad. Oh, I'd love to have seen your mother," Mrs. Harrison said, now confident. She patted her white turban. Her hands were large, and the joints of her fingers thick. She wore deep-red nail polish, and her skin was milky. A faint dusting of freckles, like nutmeg, went up the backs of her arms. Her mouth bore traces of dark lipstick. She had an aura of faded and dreadful glamour.

"I used to see your father at Saratoga, too," Mrs. Harrison said. "He loved it there."

"Yes," Roger said.

"Do you go to Saratoga?"

"No," Roger said.

"It's a beautiful spot," Mrs. Harrison said. "Right along here. Turn left. It's really rather spectacular. We can see the sun rise *and* set. Come in and see the view. I'll just be a minute. I'll have to find my man and send him back down to the car. You can take him; it's right on your way. Because it won't start."

Mrs. Harrison's was like most of the old houses: low white stucco, with a palm-thatched roof. A tree with violent purple blossoms stood by the front door. On the garage roof were three black men wearing shorts and sunglasses. Mrs. Harrison looked up at them, cupping her hands into a megaphone.

"Hoo-oo!" she called. "Where's Martin?"

The men looked at her and shook their heads. Mrs. Harrison turned back to Roger.

"Wouldn't you know, the roof had termites. I wasn't here for five years; that's why it's all such a mess. I'll get Martin. Rose will know where he is. Because he has to fix the car. It won't start."

She shuffled across the scrubby lawn in her transparent plastic sandals. Across from the garage stood a small white-washed cottage; a radio inside blared ragged music. Mrs. Harrison stood outside the window. Elbows pressed tight to her chest, she put her hands to her mouth.

"Ro-ose!" she called through the music. Rose did not ap-

pear, and she tried again. "Ro-ose!" Her voice was high and impatient.

Roger looked up at the garage roof. A man in yellow shorts and reflector sunglasses was looking at Mrs. Harrison's narrow back, her bathrobe and turban. He was laughing.

Rose emerged from the other end of the cottage. She was black, with a large middle. She had an injured expression and wore a loose paisley dress and a white apron.

Mrs. Harrison, not seeing her, leaned into the window full of music. "*Rose!*" she called despairingly.

"Hello!" Rose shouted, right behind her.

"Oh, there you are, Rose," Mrs. Harrison said, turning around. "Where's Martin?"

Rose shook her head with finality. "Don't know."

"But I have to find him," Mrs. Harrison said. "I need him to fix the car, you see."

"Don't know," Rose said again. She looked at the ground and rubbed her hands up and down under her apron.

Mrs. Harrison said nothing. She turned her back on Rose and walked toward Roger. "It's no good telling them anything," she said loudly. "They don't listen to a word you say." She gave Roger a fretful smile. "Now come inside and let me show you the house." Roger started to speak, but she held up her hand. "You have to see it. It's the best view on the island. Come in for one minute. I know you need to get back."

In fact Roger did not need to get back. No one was waiting for him; there was no appointment he could hold up to deflect Mrs. Harrison's commanding invitation. Actually, it might be useful to see this house. Roger was here to help his mother put her house up for sale, and seeing another one would give him an idea of the market. He stepped inside.

A large open room led, through a wide doorway, to a terrace beyond. The ceiling above him was high and airy, the struts and beams exposed. The sight of it, the orderly right-angled pattern, the architectural skeleton, reminded Roger suddenly of the structure of his parents' house, and of the night he had first seen the plans for it.

 T had been in the big brick house in Greenwich, where Roger grew up and where his mother still lived. It had been at Thanksgiving in Roger's senior year at Middlesex. He and Steven had both come home from school for the holiday. Before dinner that evening their father called them all into the library. This was his room, long and narrow, with two tall windows. It was paneled in dark wood, with high built-in bookshelves. That night he had lighted a fire, and the room was warm and glowing. The whole house smelled of the roasting turkey. Roger's grandparents were coming, and the air was full of anticipation.

Roger, Steven, and their father were all wearing ties, blue blazers, and gray flannels. Roger's mother, Charlotte, wore a dark-green dress and sat on the leather chesterfield sofa.

The black Lab, Troy, had crept up beside her, his heavy tail thumping quietly on the pillows. The dog smiled widely at the boys, his eyes narrowed happily, his rose-colored tongue hanging out. Their mother, too, was smiling. Their father, who seldom smiled, was jingling keys in his pocket. He did this when he was either pleased or annoyed; tonight he was pleased.

"Ready?" he asked the boys. He was a tall man, bulky through the middle. He had a high, beaked nose, fierce eyebrows, and a florid complexion. At his temples were bushy gray tufts of hair. He was mostly bald, in a gleaming, powerful way.

Roger and his brother nodded alertly, though they did not know what it was they were ready for. An easel stood in front of the fireplace, a white linen napkin draped over the top of it.

Their father looked at the easel and then back at the boys.

"Get that dog off the sofa," he said irritably. Troy was strictly forbidden to sit on the furniture, but only Roger's father enforced this.

"Troy," Charlotte said. At her tone Troy closed his mouth. His face turned mournful, his body became immobile. "Troy," Charlotte said again, loudly. She pushed at him. Everyone watched while Troy reluctantly climbed down, his weight sinking heavily from shoulder to shoulder.

"All ready?" their father asked again, brusquely. "Stand up straight, you two!" Roger and his brother moved their shoulders dutifully.

Their father lifted up the linen napkin. "Look at that!" he said proudly. On the easel was a drawing of a house; the boys had no idea why.

"Wow," Roger said politely.

"Wow is right," their father said severely. "Wow is right. The best-looking house in the whole damn club." His face was stern but he jingled his keys loudly, radiating satisfaction.

It was an architect's rendering, the building drawn in straight and perfect lines. It was an ideal, a paradigm of a house: orderly, calm, supported by logic. Roger stared intently. He tried to imagine the drawing as an actual house, built, real, the sound of real waves beyond it, and real palm fronds crashing outside in a real sea wind. Roger tried, but the transformation from theoretical to real was beyond him. He felt that he was encountering his own limitations, and the vast reaches of his father's strength. It seemed as though the house would be created out of his father's willpower.

This made Roger feel both proud and baffled, as though his father knew some empowering secret. Roger felt that he himself was stretching toward this, trying to grow into what

his father possessed so easily—his stern certitude, his absolute grasp of the laws that governed the world. Roger pulled his shoulders back farther, drawing himself up. At his feet Troy thumped his tail hopefully; Roger, usually his ally, frowned down at him.

OW Roger looked around Mrs. Harrison's living room. It was large and light, but it looked as though it had not been touched since the 1950s. The turquoise plaster walls were covered with long, complicated cracks. Black kidney-shaped coffee tables stood on looping wrought-iron legs, in front of big curved sofas made of contoured foam-rubber cushions. The throw pillows were covered in abstract shell designs. Everything that was not faded turquoise was faded yellow. On a table was a huge conch shell, glossy and gum-pink inside, with a hard white undulating edge, like congealed icing. A faint odor of mildew hung in the air.

"Look at that," Mrs. Harrison said, pointing with satisfaction outside, beyond the terrace. Below them was the long, sloping hillside of tropical thicket. Roger gazed dutifully at the ocean in the distance, flat and gray-blue, glittering restlessly.

"That's where the sun sets—right there," Mrs. Harrison said authoritatively. "You can see it in the evening."

"Very nice," Roger said.

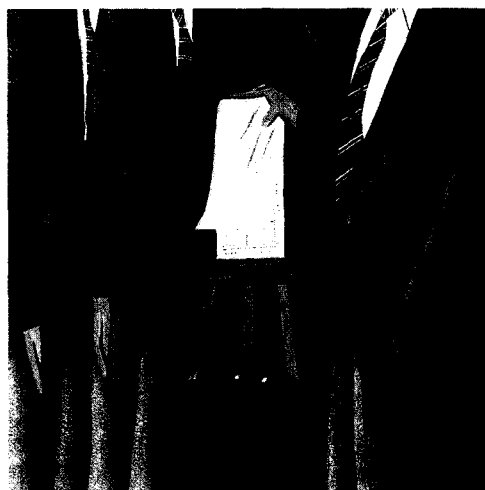
"Now let me show you the rest of the house," Mrs. Harrison said. "It's quite a remarkable place. Martin will be back in a minute, and you can take him down to the car. I've told him a hundred times *not to go off without telling someone where you're going*. You can't get them to listen to a word you say."

"Mrs. Harrison, I'm afraid I have to get back for lunch," Roger said untruthfully.

"I know that, I know that," Mrs. Harrison said. "That's why I'm so cross at Martin. Let me just go outside and find him." She vanished.

Roger did not follow her. He was reluctant to leave her stranded, with no car and no telephone, but he had seen enough of Mrs. Harrison's house, and of Mrs. Harrison. He did not look up at the rafters. His memory of the house plans had a second part; it came back to him unasked, unwelcome.

THE next morning Roger had been called into the library alone. When he came in, silent on the thick carpet, his father closed the door behind him without speaking and walked to the fireplace. The sky outside was over-



cast; the light inside was dull; the room was cold. Roger's father stood again by the fireplace, now black and empty. The easel still displayed the image of the perfect house, but it now seemed pallid and irrelevant. Roger's father did not look at his architect's rendering. He looked at Roger. His face was dark, his eyebrows drawn fiercely together. He jingled his keys.

"Know why you're here?" he asked. The question seemed an accusation.

Roger knew, of course. The trouble at school had started with minor offenses—skipping study hall, lights on late, a forgotten appointment with his adviser. Missing chapel. Once, he and some friends had gone off campus without permission, and had been caught walking along the road by a master driving by. There had been warnings about Roger's attitude. Then, just before Thanksgiving, Middlesex had played its annual football game against its great rival, St. George's. The game was at St. George's, and Middlesex won, for the first time in a number of years. It was an important victory, and the happy inspiration had come to Roger that the way to celebrate was to make his way into the St. George's chapel and ring the bell.

He remembered the silence of the empty chapel, the smell of damp stone, the ecclesiastical perfume of hymnbooks and cushions, the lightning thrill of illicitness. He remembered running easily up the stairs to the belfry, finding the long coil of heavy rope, unguarded; setting himself onto the rope, fixing his grip on the rough surface, putting his weight onto the rope. He hung in the air, clamped onto the rope, his feet pulled up under him, his body and gravity insisting that a great change begin. For a long moment nothing happened. Then he felt the rope begin to give ponderous way to his weight, to begin its slow descent. The great sonorous clamor began, the clanging jubilation sent out into the air. It was his doing. It was wonderful. He had nearly been expelled.

"You know why you're here or not?" his father asked again. He walked back and forth in front of the fireplace, his hands in his trouser pockets, his strides menacing. Against the somber sky the heavy green curtains looked black.

"I guess so," Roger said. He stood up straight, his shoulders pulled back.

His father stopped. "Why do you think you're here?" His tone was belligerent.

"Ring the bell, I guess," Roger said bravely.

His father snorted. "You guess?"

"Ring the bell at St. George's," Roger said.

His father glared at him. "You're goddamned right. You're here because of the goddamned bell." He stopped and stared at Roger for a second, and then turned away again. "I don't know who you think you are," he said.

Roger said nothing.

"I went up on Tuesday to talk to your headmaster."

Roger had known nothing of this. The thought of his fa-

ther at his school, talking to the headmaster, unbeknownst to him, gave him a chill. His father in his gray suit, frowning, walking rapidly across the gravel of the parking lot toward the brick administration building. It had really happened, three days ago. Roger felt a darkening of the room.

"Drinkwater said he'd never had a boy like you. He said no one had ever done a thing like that before." His father faced Roger. His thick eyebrows were pulled angrily together. "I told him he should expel you."

Silence filled the room.

"Kick the boy out. Teach him a lesson." His father looked at him, his eyes narrowed. His mouth was a wide, bleak line, set by a rigid jaw.

Roger said nothing. He did not know what he could possibly say. He felt cold, as though the November wind were sweeping right through him, as though the house itself were no longer protection. The room seemed colder than anywhere he had ever been.

Roger's father fixed him for a moment with narrowed eyes, and then began again, walking back and forth before the blackened fireplace.

"He wouldn't do it," his father said. "Drinkwater said he wanted to give you another chance." Roger's father shook his head, his voice contemptuous.

 OW, in the tropical air, Roger could still feel the cold of that morning, the sound of his father's voice as he said the word "expel." He saw the easel, the drawing of the house. He had felt ashamed that it should be a witness to this.

Roger moved out onto Mrs. Harrison's terrace. By now his mother would be back from golf, and changing for lunch. Charlotte was tall and thin, with long limbs and dry, mottled skin that wrinkled diagonally along her arms. A spray of fine lines radiated from her mouth, and her pale-blue eyes had milky rims around them. Her short dust-colored hair was neatly waved, and held in place by two combs at her temples. She wore no makeup.

Charlotte had announced her plans at breakfast. "I'm having lunch with the Simpsons," she said, not including Roger. She squeezed lime over the narrow prow of a pale-green melon slice. "I doubt they'd interest you. They're a hundred years old, and he's had a stroke. I've known them all my life. Betty's a saint. I don't think you'd have much fun. Better have a sandwich at the club. Come if you want. Betty's cook is famous. Worst on the whole island."

Roger had not minded his exclusion. In fact, he was relieved to be alone; they had been together almost constantly for four whole days. Roger had never before spent this much time alone with his mother, and he had wondered if it would be uncomfortable—awkwardly intimate. He had dreaded some disclosure from his mother, some unwanted revelation of grief, loneliness, regret—something ghastly, and unavoidable. This had not happened. Charlotte had been as she al-

Why Are Catholics So Wimpy?



The Vatican thunders against abortion, tyrants, illicit sex, consumerism, dissenting theologians, disobedient priests and nuns, and more. But walk into your average parish. Where's the beef? We get crumbs — and platitudes. We don't hear much, if anything, about the Church's teachings on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, pornography, the indissolubility of marriage — "too controversial." Birth control and Hell are taboo subjects. Pop psychology and feel-good theology are "in." Sin is "out," prompting one to wonder why Christ bothered to get crucified.

Cowardly clerics, fearful of being politically incorrect or challenging the flock or offending some stray soul, keep the full Catholic message from us. In effect we're blindfolded — left to stumble in the dark, prey to false prophets and the sirens of the world, not even knowing why we're Catholic.

How long is American Catholicism going to censor itself, bow down before an alien culture?

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ways was: cool, pleasant, composed. Roger was proud of this, proud of her emotional reticence, her strength, her sense of propriety. He was proud of himself, too: for maintaining an atmosphere—decorous, civilized, stable—in which an emotional storm could not occur.

Cynthia Harrison came out behind him. "Rose thinks he'll be back soon," she said. "Let me get you a pick-me-up."

The term surprised him: it had been his father's. Roger did not answer. Mrs. Harrison bustled back inside to an ice bucket. Roger followed. She scooped ice into two fat plastic glasses. "I will say Rose makes the best rum punch in the whole club. Everyone says so."

But Roger had not gotten a sandwich at the club, and he did not want his empty stomach invaded by rum punch. He answered in a no-thank-you tone.

"I'm afraid—" he began. But his voice was not quite firm enough, and Mrs. Harrison could hear through it that he had no plans. She waved her hand and interrupted.

"He'll be back in a moment, Rose says. Because he has to fix the car." Mrs. Harrison handed him a glass, took her own, and guided him to a chair. She sat on a sofa, leaning back theatrically against the cushions. Her long white legs were crossed at the thigh, the veins bold and blue.

Roger wondered how old she was. Seventy? A bit more?

"Go on," she said. "Try it. Everyone says it's the best."

Roger took a sip: sweet and strong. He would drink half of it. If Martin was not back by then, Roger would drive to the club and ask the manager to take care of Mrs. Harrison and her car.

"Now, tell me about your father," Mrs. Harrison said. "I'm so sorry to hear he died. What happened?"

"There's not much to tell," Roger said. "He had a heart attack last summer, in Greenwich. He was playing golf. The eighth hole," he added politely, in case she knew the course.

"Oh, your poor mother," Mrs. Harrison said expansively, shaking her head. "I know just what she's going through. I remember when Eric died. I was devastated." Her tone had become relaxed and intimate. "It changes everything—death. I mean apart from the grief. Everything is different. You don't know what time you should get up in the morning, or when you should have lunch. Should you go on having the paper delivered? You simply don't know what to do." She gestured widely. "And then people stop asking you out. They ask you at first, out of pity, but pretty soon you turn into a single woman instead of a widow, and then they stop. No one wants a single woman at the dinner table. Your best friend will only ask you to lunch: she thinks you're after her husband. As though I'd look at John Addington: a drunken

sheep!" Cynthia Harrison laughed and shook her head. "But we can't be picky, of course. None of us can. We aren't such bargains ourselves anymore." She suddenly smiled disarmingly, tilting her head. Her white hands with their gnarled knuckles fanned out on either side of her face, as though displaying some disappointing merchandise.

Roger looked down at his drink reprovingly. He did not want Mrs. Harrison's sympathy, and she was wrong about his mother. Charlotte had been entirely self-possessed when his father died. She had been sad, of course, and muted, but calm, rational, not dithering. Roger could no more imagine his mother wondering scattily whether or not to have lunch than he could imagine her wearing blood-colored nail polish and a

turban, flagging down strangers on the road, commanding favors.

"How long has your—how long have you been alone?" Roger asked, to change the subject. He looked at his watch. He would stay for five more minutes and then leave, Martin or no Martin.

"I was divorced in 1956," Mrs. Harrison said promptly. "I married Eric in 1957, and he died in 1979. But I knew your father long before all that. He was *such* an attractive man."

"Did you know him well?" Roger asked, sure she had not.

"At one time I knew him well," Mrs. Harrison said thoughtfully. "I used to see him at Saratoga. I never saw your mother there."

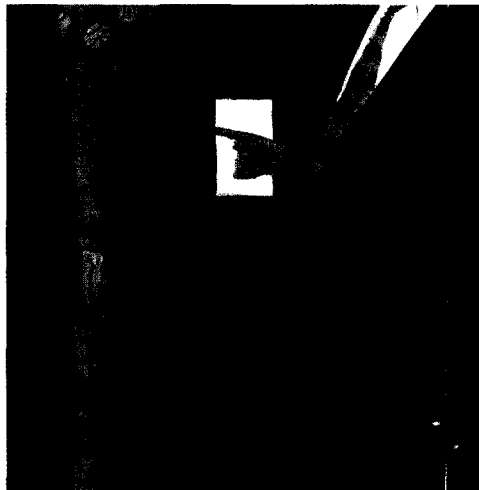
"She didn't go," Roger said decisively, as though he knew. In fact the trips to Saratoga had been in the summer, when he and Steven were at camp. He didn't remember whether his mother had gone or not, but he refused to allow Mrs. Harrison to be an authority on his parents.

Mrs. Harrison took another long swallow of Rose's famous rum punch. So did Roger: it had begun to seem like a good idea. The rum was sweet and comforting, somehow energizing.

"No, I never saw your mother there. Your father said she didn't like it." Mrs. Harrison looked at Roger and paused. "Saratoga, I mean." There was another pause, as though Mrs. Harrison was about to say something more, or as though she was waiting for Roger to ask something more, something about his father.

Whatever she expected, Roger refused. "I don't know what my mother likes," he said abruptly. "Bridge. Golf. She has the garden club. I don't know what she does. What do you do all day?" he asked, surprising himself. But he wondered now if his mother was invited out by her friends at home. He had never thought of this before.

"Oh, I have so much I can hardly get it all in," Mrs. Har-



rierson said, raising her hand to stem the tide. "You've seen what's going on down here. It's just as bad at home. Things seem to fall apart as soon as you notice them. Oh, you know what I mean. As soon as you've got the pool filter fixed, the maid quits. I've quite a lot to do. And I've got my boards. I'm very active on my boards. Have been for years."

"I suppose my mother is on some boards," Roger said, frowning. He wondered if she was.

"Of course your mother's on some boards," Mrs. Harrison said, waving her glass generously. "What else would she do?" She paused and looked at Roger. "What do you do? Are you married?"

"I'm a lawyer," Roger said shortly.

"Ah!" Mrs. Harrison said inattentively, and stood up. She brought the pitcher of punch over and replenished their glasses.

"Are you married?" she asked again, settling down onto the sofa. Her tone was kindly, and she tilted her head sympathetically.

"Not any more," Roger said stiffly.

Mrs. Harrison shook her head. "Oh, it's so *painful*, getting divorced. I went through *agonies* myself, even though it was my own idea."

Roger took another swallow of punch. He would not discuss with this woman his divorce, his failure.

"Well, it's one thing my parents didn't do," he said, reminding her instead of his family's success. "They always stayed together."

"You mean they always stayed married," Mrs. Harrison said lightly.

"They stayed together," Roger said stubbornly.

"They stayed married. They didn't always stay together. I knew your father very well," Mrs. Harrison said.

"And just how was it that you knew him so well?" Roger asked.

"Saratoga," Mrs. Harrison said.

"I suppose he stayed with you there?" Roger asked beligerently. He was trying to goad her into indiscretion, or falsehood, something he could deny.

"Oh, of course he stayed with us," Mrs. Harrison said, surprising him with the pronoun. "Lots of times. We had a lovely big house there; he always came to us. Sometimes we'd all motor up from New York. He loved Saratoga. We had a wonderful pair of linden trees by the terrace. Your father was crazy about those trees. He used to stand underneath them and look up into the branches and close his eyes. He said he liked the sound of the wind in them. He said it was different from the wind in other trees."

Roger made a small noise through his nose. He had never seen his father look up into a tree.

Mrs. Harrison shook her head. "Oh, we always loved having him. And of course he was wonderful company. He was so funny."

"Funny?" Roger said, offended. "Roger Conrad?" His father had not been remotely funny.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Harrison said, smiling reminiscently. She took another swallow of rum punch. She looked past him out the doorway and without any warning she called out suddenly, "Martin!" in a loud high voice. She listened, frozen, her head raised, her eyes narrowed. She had put on more lipstick, Roger noticed, and the dark mouth glistened horribly in her faded face. No one answered from outside. Mrs. Harrison looked back at Roger.

"They laugh at me, you know," she said in a conversational tone. "The help. It's all changed. When we first came down, years ago, they loved us because we gave them work. And we loved them because they gave us this beautiful place. We used to be friends. Now they hate us because we have money. They hate the scholarship funds we set up for their children; they hate the library we built them; they hate everything we do. Now they laugh at us behind our backs, and we lock every room when we leave it." Mrs. Harrison shook her head. "I miss being friends with them. My old cook, Rachel—I miss her. We used to tell each other about our families, and the awful things that happened, and we'd laugh together. Now Rachel's dead, and I have Rose, her niece. Rose barely speaks to me. She won't even look at me unless she has to, and she won't smile at me at all. Not a glimmer." Mrs. Harrison shook her head again. "I miss my friends."

Roger didn't answer. He wanted to discredit her, deny everything Mrs. Harrison said, but he could not. Some things she said were true, and everything seemed complicated now. He felt uncomfortable, unsure of himself, unwillingly respectful of her.

Mrs. Harrison returned to Roger's father, smiling. "No, he was a wonderful man to have around. So entertaining."

But here Roger was on firm ground. "My father," he said reprovingly, "was a very serious person."

"Oh, of course he was," Mrs. Harrison said, shaking her head. "I don't mean anything *against* your father. He was a *marvelous* man. So funny!"

Roger straightened, magisterial. "Mrs. Harrison, I think I know my own father," he said. "He was *not* a funny man."

Mrs. Harrison raised her eyebrows kindly. "Well, maybe we saw different sides of him. You know, he used to tell those wonderful stories on himself. You must have heard them. Of course, he was a terribly bad boy when he was younger. You've heard about all that. He must have told you."

"No," Roger said.

"Well, you've heard how he was fired from his first job?"

"Fired?" Roger repeated, smiling now. He shook his head. "My father was never fired from anywhere."

"He was fired from his very first job, at a bank. For throwing paper bags of water out the window. He hit one of the tellers on her lunch hour." Mrs. Harrison leaned back, rubbing her papery white throat, and laughed expansively. "You wouldn't think they'd *fire* him just for *that*, would you?"

"It sounds quite reasonable, actually," Roger said stiffly. He could not imagine his father leaning out into the air, supple, hilarious, looking for targets.

"It doesn't to me," Cynthia Harrison said. "But it turned out that he'd already done something worse. It was the two things together, you see. You haven't heard this story?"

Roger shook his head, skeptical.

Mrs. Harrison leaned farther back against the sofa. "Oh, it was years ago. I think he and your mother were just married. One night they'd gone out to dinner with some friends. Afterward he wanted to go on; she wanted to go home. So she went home, and he went on. When he finally got back to the apartment, your mother was pretty cross." Cynthia Harrison looked sympathetically at Roger. "It was *quite* late by then. Well, your mother wouldn't let him in. He stood out in the hall trying to persuade her, but she refused. I think he must have gotten a little loud, you know. The neighbors got involved. Everyone came out into the hall and they all had their own points of view. It got quite lively. But your mother was determined, and finally your father realized she wasn't going to let him in. By then it was around six o'clock in the morning, maybe later. He'd had, really, *quite* a lot to drink. And so it seemed to him that the best thing to do was to go straight to the office. He had no other place to go, and he had to be there in an hour or so anyway. It seemed to solve all the problems at once: not being able to get in, finding a place to sleep, and getting to work on time." Mrs. Harrison's face lit up as though she herself had just solved all her problems.

Listening to her, Roger could feel his heart pounding more and more urgently. He felt a turbulence inside him he did not understand. He felt angrier and angrier at Mrs. Harrison.

"So he took a taxicab downtown. He let himself into the office, which of course was empty. He sat down at his own desk and tried to take a little catnap there, but it felt cramped. So he set off to find somewhere he could be more comfortable. He found one, settled down, and went straight to sleep. And that was where the president of the bank found him at nine o'clock, when he went into the boardroom for a meeting with a client. Your father was fast asleep on that big mahogany table, stretched out full length, flat out. He was still in black tie. Hadn't even taken off his pumps." Mrs. Harrison laughed again, closing her eyes with delight. She opened them finally and looked at Roger. "Oh, you *must* have heard that story."

Roger had nearly finished his second rum punch. "I have never heard that story," he said severely. "And frankly, Mrs. Harrison, I have a hard time believing it." He stood up to leave. He was dismissing her, her ridiculous story, her ridiculous getup.

"Oh, it's true, all right," Mrs. Harrison said, smiling. She leaned back, pulling her legs up sideways underneath her and stretching her arms out along the cushions like a very old starlet. She had rolled up the sleeves of her robe, and the

flesh along her arms was loose and quivery. She took a long sip of punch and looked up suddenly at the ceiling. "Ticky Cobb was there too, at the bank. Everyone knew about it." She drank again. "Well, but he was *famous*, your father."

Roger said nothing: Ticky Cobb was a very old friend of his father's. And they had had some business connection, he knew. For some reason this enraged him; he was enraged not to be able to deny this monstrous story flatly, totally.

Mrs. Harrison leaned forward. "Let me freshen your drink. It would be *rude* not to, since I'm keeping you here."

"Thank you," Roger said, "but no. I'm afraid it's really time for me to leave." He set down his glass. "I'll run over to the club and ask them to see about your car. Thank you so much for the drink." His voice was cold, loaded with contempt: he loathed this woman. He loathed this terrible cacophony she had loosed into the air, the turbulence in his chest, the clamor in his mind. His father had not been like that: this woman was a liar.

Mrs. Harrison stood up too. "You look like him, you know," she said, and smiled.

But now he had her, Roger thought, triumphant. This was false. Roger did not in the least look like his father. He smiled.

"I'm afraid you're wrong," he said with satisfaction. "I don't at all. Everyone knows that."

But Mrs. Harrison only smiled back. She was not flattened by his denial—not even dismayed. She shrugged her shoulders. "Maybe no one else does, but when I look at you, I see him," she said gently.

She seemed to have done it again. She had said something Roger knew to be false, but which he couldn't deny. He couldn't disprove this, any more than he could disprove the terrible, unwelcome story about his father. For there it was, the thing he had so dreaded hearing down here: the unwelcome revelation, the ghastly disclosure. Only the anguish was his, not his mother's.

Roger stood looking at Mrs. Harrison without speaking. He was being impolite, but he hardly knew what to say now, he felt such confusion inside. Something was rising up in him: a great surge of rage at Mrs. Harrison, contempt for her; but something jubilant had been loosed as well. Roger felt as though he were again racing up those narrow chapel stairs, alone, running upward toward the wild, dangerous song that only he could make. He felt in a state of chaos, rage and jubilation shifting and glittering together in his head. What held him, what he could not bear, was the thought of his father stretched out on that mahogany table in his dinner jacket, his black-grosgrain tie limp against his stiff white shirt, his patent-leather pumps still on. The terrible, contented smile on his father's face.

All Roger knew now for certain, the only thing, was that he hated Mrs. Harrison. How could he not? How could he ever forgive her? How could he thank her enough? ☞

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Barking Up the Right Tree

A night on the heels of America's premier female coon hunter

THE midsummer morning before their wedding, in an enchanted forest near Athens, Shakespeare's Theseus and Hippolyta can think of nothing more romantic than a hunt with hounds.

"We will, fair Queen,

up to the mountain's top / And mark the musical confusion / Of hounds and echo in conjunction," the Duke of Athens declares. Encouraged by her approving re-

ply, he adds a few words that only a lover of homely dogs could appreciate: "My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind . . .

/ With ears that sweep away the morning dew; / Crook-knee'd,

and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls; / Slow

in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells, / Each under each."

Tonight we are thousands of years and thousands of miles from the setting of

A Midsummer Night's Dream, but the hounds still roughly resemble the Duke's description. Their voices hardly bring bells to mind, though. Distorted by distance and overexertion, their yips and squalls drift toward us in this midnight dark, rising to a pitch of pure hysteria. As the dogs lose the scent and circle to rediscover it, their voices lace together and unravel, climbing and falling through the stunted hardwood forest. Somewhere ahead a raccoon is scrambling to stay ahead of them, doubling back on his tracks or paddling down a creek, trying a few desperate tricks before crawling up a tree. For a while the dogs send reports of their progress. Then, abruptly, their noises fade, leaving us stranded in these strange woods.

"Which way did he go, George?"

"I can hear the blue bitch, but I think they're all lost."

"They'd get found if they'd come back this way."

The occasion is the first round of the Oklahoma State Professional Coonhunters Championship. Throughout these low-lying hills "casts" of four dogs—one per coon hunter—are competing to see how many raccoons they can run up trees. In a competitive coon hunt a judge starts his stopwatch when a cast is released and stops it when a raccoon has been treed or hunters have given up on a particular spot, repeating the process until two hours have elapsed on the watch. During those two hours the dogs try to rack up as many points as possible: the first dog to strike a trail earns 100 points, the second earns 75, the third 50, and the fourth 25. The first dog to tree a coon earns 100 points, the next one 75, and so on. If, as often happens, the treetop is too dense with leaves for a coon to be spotted, the dogs are awarded provisional points that can be used to break a tie. Even when they are spotted, the raccoons won't be touched: competitive coon hunting is a bloodless sport.

No breathless chase, no feats of marksmanship, no cathartic kill: for the dogs' owners, the thrills are nearly all second-hand. Standing in the dark, listening to distant baying, coon hunters piece together the story of a hunt, picturing themselves in their dogs' places, careening through greenbriers in search of a scent. To score

by Burkhard Bilger

points, a hunter has to hear his or her dog's voice through the hubbub, understand its every inflection, and tell the judge when the dog strikes a trail or trees a coon. Mistaken claims are severely penalized—barking at a false trail or barking at an empty tree can cost up to 100 points—and some dogs are given to ambiguity.

With our headlamps off I can just make out my companions: four coon hunters and one other observer, their outlines faintly phosphorescent with starlight. To my left Sondra Beck's sinewy shape is hunched over a cigarette ember. "I don't know what I'm doing with Sandy out here," she says. "She just had a litter seven weeks ago." Most hunters still prefer larger, more aggressive male coonhounds (though that is changing), but Beck has never had anything but females. They may be out of commission from time to time, she says, but they're less apt to pick a fight or get distracted. "Some folks say females are in heat twice a year but males are in it all year round."

In a sport that demands a certain irrational dedication—a willingness to endure solitude and sleepless nights in pursuit of nocturnal prey—Beck still rates as something of a fanatic. She began hunting with her brother at the age of six, and over the ensuing forty-seven years has almost never been without a dog. In the foothills of the Kiamichi Mountains, where she runs a kennel for a living, the raccoons are in a constant state of alert: Beck hunts more than 340 nights a year, most of the time in the woods behind her mobile home.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the Queen of the Amazons claims to have gone bear hunting with Hercules and Cadmus themselves. But even she might have been reluctant to climb into a truck full of men in the dead of night, drive along deserted county roads, and walk into the woods for three to six hours at a stretch. In all her years of hunting Beck has never had another woman in her cast, yet she hasn't been daunted by the company or the competition. Over the past ten years she has placed first in the Oklahoma State Coonhunting Championship and second in the Texas State Coonhunting Championship, and she has beaten her own husband—also an accomplished hunter—in the quarterfinals of the Coonhunting World Championship. Long-limbed and gristly, Beck can out-hike

most of her competitors, and her dogs are impeccably trained.

Good coon hunters can detect uncertainty in a dog's voice through a mile of forest and the din of other dogs. They can tell when a dog is "runnin' trash"—ignoring its training to trail a skunk or a bobcat—and when it has found more than one raccoon in a tree. They are only truly in the dark when their dogs are quiet—as the dogs tonight have been for a few minutes now.

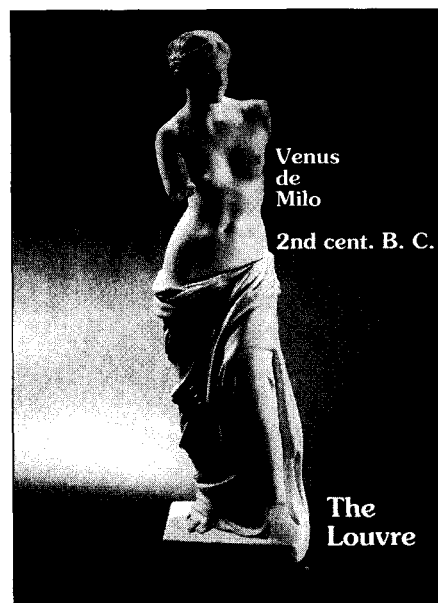
A sharp, squeaky bark comes from deep in the woods, like the sound of an ax biting into hickory.

"Tree, K.C.!"

One by one the hounds' voices lift from the same point in the woods, sounding as hungry, if not quite as harmonious, as those of wolves. A typical dog's bark, seen on a sound spectrogram, is midway between a whine and a growl—a confused "come-here-go-away" sound. Domestication, some animal behaviorists believe, has turned dogs into arrested adolescents, oscillating endlessly between affection and aggression. But these coonhounds hardly sound confused. Though they have been bred as carefully as the crops in this once-wild country, and though their hunting has grown stylized and recreational, their howling still means meat.

We wait a few more minutes before switching on our lamps. Generations removed from people who hunted to survive, we can't expect to shed our own domestication. But in the dark, listening to those ravenous voices, we can imagine how doing so might feel.

COONHOUNDS, like Bowie knives and Winchester rifles, began as frontier tools—European designs adapted to the American wilderness. George Washington, whom one could call the father of coonhound breeding as well as of the country, received seven Grand Bleu de Gascogne hounds from the Marquis de Lafayette in 1785. Like Theseus, Washington owned dogs capable of a melodious noise—his stepgrandson compared their voices to the bells of Moscow—but he was less impressed by their hunting skills. Long-eared and tireless, Gascon hounds were famous for having the keenest nose of any breed and for having chased France's wolves to extinction in the Middle Ages. For centuries, however, they had hunted only things that stayed on



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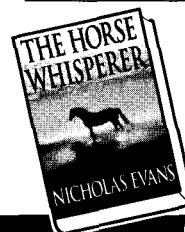
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the ground: hare, deer, wild boar. Once in Virginia, they ran into trouble. Raccoons, like bobcats, American gray foxes, mountain lions, and other native animals, have a penchant for hiding in trees. A dog without a treeing instinct might charge right past such quarry, or else abandon it before the owner caught up. Four months after receiving his French hounds Washington complained that he was still "plagued with the Dogs running Hogs."

Many American colonists needed all-purpose "varmint" dogs for their survival. Any hound that could scare animals up trees suited their purpose, so they threw English foxhounds, Cuban bloodhounds, German boxers, and red Irish hounds into the canine melting pot. By the early 1800s new American breeds had begun to emerge. In the Great Smoky Mountains the descendants of a German immigrant named Johannes Plott used their schweishunds as the foundation for a breed of brindle-colored dogs soon famous for hunting bear. In the Ohio Valley a scout and Indian fighter named Simon Kenton helped to breed the first black-and-tan coonhounds, known for their magnificent ears and sensitive noses. In the Louisiana bayous the descendants of French trappers bred bluetick coonhounds that could nearly pass for Lafayette's pure Gascon hounds. The United Kennel Club now registers six coonhound breeds—English, Plott, bluetick, redbone, black-and-tan, and Treeing Walker—but the elite American Kennel Club fully recognizes only black and tans. One bluetick owner told me, "The AKC would rather register some strange, furry little animal in China than the dogs that helped build this country."

Most coonhounds are still proudly plebeian. Loose-jointed and ungainly-looking when loafing on a porch, they turn sleek with purpose on a hunt. Nose to the ground, pendulous ears stirring up day-old scents, they howl into the woods whenever they smell success. Advertisements for dogs in magazines like *American Cooner* and *Coonhound Bloodlines* invariably show them at the height of their powers: paws high up on a tree, eyes rolling backward, neck streaked with drool. "My cold-nosed, cat-footed, bawl-mouthed, chop-mouthed, pressure-tree Grand Nite Champions breed true every time," an advertisement may say. Loosely translated, this means "Like their parents, the puppies I'm selling have a good sense

of smell and durable feet; they should bawl when they strike a trail, switch to a bark when they tree a coon, stick by the tree until the owner comes, and, thanks to all these qualities, win the highest honor available in the coon-hunting world."

Sandy, Sonda Beck's dog, is the latest model in coonhounds, bred specifically for competitive hunts. Trim and light on her feet—more foxhound than bloodhound—Sandy doesn't waste time worrying out cold trails inch by inch, as a "cold-nosed" dog would. She skims over the terrain to home in on the freshest, "hottest" scent and run it down as quickly as possible. Some hunters miss the behemoths they grew up with and the epic hunts those dogs used to lead, but Beck has no regrets. "Those black and tans, they might pick a trail three days old and howl and boohoo over it for hours and hours," she told me on the way to the coon hunt. "I don't have any time for that. I need my dog to move that track."

TWENTY or thirty pickups arrived before us and were gathered in a crooked half circle in front of a corrugated-aluminum shack. Here and there hunters slouched against fenders or tugged on their hip waders, killing time as the sun crept behind the blackjack oaks. Though they looked as ragged as sharecroppers, few had spent less than \$10,000 on coon dogs and hunting gear, and some had spent much more. Their hounds, tied to tailgates with frayed lengths of rope, could fetch up to \$20,000 apiece from a breeder. Their mud-spattered trucks were crammed with electronic gear: radio-tracking systems, lamps with interchangeable lenses, and collars that can give a small shock if a dog barks up the wrong tree. When competitive coon hunters aren't demonstrating such gizmos, they are usually discussing their dogs' sperm counts. Many of them regularly send their champion studs to a place like Galaxie Genetics Reproductive Center, in Ohio. There employees collect a dog's semen in a plastic vagina, package it in "straws" chilled by liquid nitrogen, and send it off by courier for next-day insemination.

As the first fireflies rose to meet the dusk, light streamed from the shack's open door, drawing a swarm of restless hunters carapaced in crusty overalls. Inside, a few of their wives and children were serving french fries and chili dogs

from a plywood stand. Beck, as usual, was the only woman in hunting gear. "A lot of the women, they try to learn to love coon hunting 'cause that's what their husbands do," she said. "But there ain't no natural reason to like it. Stumbling out there in the night just to listen to a dog howl—it just don't make sense." Women who are "born lovin' coon hunting," as Beck says she was, may be less enamored of the gossip they tend to create. Vickie Lamb-Deal, a coon hunter from southern Georgia, remembers getting an anonymous letter from some of the wives of coon hunters in her club. "They told me that I had no business hunting with men, that I should form my own club with other women," she says. If they had just stopped to think about it, Lamb-Deal went on, they would have realized that the swamp—with the mud and the bugs and the snakes—is "the last place" you'd choose to flirt with someone's husband.

Beck has never had that kind of trouble. With her pixieish features, cropped blonde hair, and easy, joshing style, she is a perennial and unrepentant tomboy—ignored by the girls, adopted by the boys. "My sister was different from me—feminine and all," she says with a smirk. "She was the type, you'd say 'spider' and she'd run a mile." Beck's own children were "town kids by nature who just happened to be raised in the country." When Beck took them out on their first hunt, her son disappeared in the middle of the night. She found him sitting in a patch of grass, reading a Hardy Boys novel with a penlight. He is now a computer programmer in Dallas.

A television and a satellite dish are the only signs of technology on Beck's sixty-acre farm near Antlers, Oklahoma—"eighteen miles from the nearest loaf of bread." Goats, orphan calves, bobtail cats, and a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig named Louise wander around her mobile home. Most of them are strays brought in by the local game warden. In the morning, when Beck leads her puppies into the woods for a run, the pig and some of the goats usually tag along.

"We're a different breed out here . . . beyond civilization," Beck likes to say. She can still walk out of her house and hunt for three days and nights without seeing another house, supplementing her supplies with dewberries, sand plums, possum grapes, and wild persimmons. She lives a

short hike from some of the state's last virgin bottomland forest, but she knows it won't be long before the old-time landowners die off or sell out. Within a generation the land around Antlers may be not so different from the land in central Ohio, where a coon hunter I know named Berton Oney has sent his English hounds after coons for the greater part of seventy years. "I'd say we have lost three quarters of the territory where we used to hunt," Oney says. "Most of our woods are so small you can only hunt them for an hour before you have to get back in the pickup."

Longtime hunters like Beck and Oney live in a limbo between two eras. As Oney puts it, "The sport seems to get bigger all the time and the terrain gets smaller." Fifteen years ago, when coonskins sold for thirty or forty dollars apiece, Beck earned her Christmas money coon hunting. (Winter, when raccoon pelts are thickest, is the official commercial coon-hunting season.) Some of her poorer neighbors went further, decimating the local raccoon population. ("You couldn't really blame them," Beck says. "A man could work all week for a hundred dollars and then go out and make as much in two hours in the woods.") But as anti-fur sentiment has risen and fur prices have plummeted, many have given up on coon hunting. "I think on the whole coon hunting has probably declined," says Tom Dooley, a former manager of coonhound field operations at the United Kennel Club.

At the same time, competitive hunters have embraced coon hunting: the number of licensed UKC coonhound events grew from 5,428 in 1984 to 6,751 in 1994. A way of life is evolving into a sport—a wilderness fix for those who can't live eighteen miles from the nearest loaf of bread. Beck still spends more time treeing raccoons on her own than in competitions, but these days at Christmastime she puts out feeders for the raccoons rather than selling their hides.

In a sense things are coming full circle. As parts of America grow to be as tame as England, and as coonhounds are bred to look more like foxhounds, so too has coon hunting begun to resemble fox hunting. Solitary hounds carefully sniffing out trails are disappearing, replaced by packs of frantic dogs, expensively equipped, earning points in national competitions. Coon hunters may never wear scarlet coats and black caps, but twenty years

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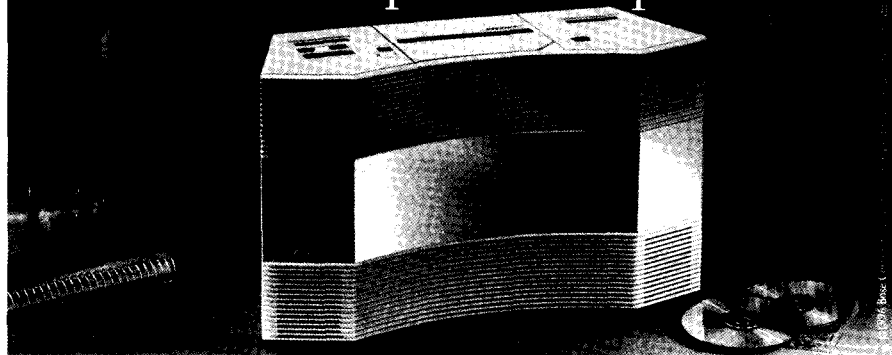


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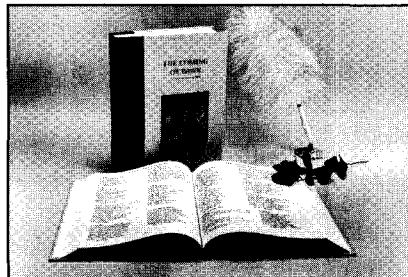
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from now their clothes may share some of their other gear's sophistication, growing as costly and understated as the Orvis outfits favored by fly-fishermen.

THERE is less than half an hour left on the judge's stopwatch, and we have yet to see a coon. We hoped to surprise a few munching on ripe mulberries in a nearby grove, but the dogs led us to huge, crooked post oaks instead. We probe their branches with the beams of our headlamps and blast on whistles designed to sound like an injured animal (raccoons are inveterate rubbernecks), but though the dogs bark with real conviction, our lamplight catches no glimmering, inquisitive eyes.

Slogging back to the road through a marshy meadow, the dogs and their owners look equally abashed, their shapes stooped and spectral ahead of me.

"Well, Katie, I don't know what the hell you're doin'," one of the hunters tells his bluetick. "But it's about time you treed a damn coon."

Beck doesn't talk to her dogs much on a hunt, "but I like 'em to talk to me a little bit more than Sandy's been doin'," she says now. At moments of unseemly quiet hunters used to comfort themselves with tales of raccoon subterfuge—of animals jumping from tree to tree or running down gravel roads to hide their scent—but competitive hunts, with their quick-treeing dogs, have changed the character of coon legends. Hunters now talk about how tough coons can be in a fight, how they can whip almost any dog one on one. A week earlier Beck was at a hunt in Paris, Texas, where four dogs chased a raccoon into a lake. Clumsy in the water, while the raccoon was in its element, the dogs had to content themselves with swimming around it and barking. The coon bided its time. When it noticed that one of the females was tiring, it calmly crawled onto the dog's head and drowned her.

Halfway back to the trucks the dogs seize upon another trail. As the minutes tick off on the judge's stopwatch, we listen to them toiling through the mulberry grove, their voices now exaggerated, trying to convince themselves as well as their owners. Fireflies drift above the marsh grasses like torches carried by a distant search party. Then comes a blaring squall from far to our left, well away from the other dogs.

"Tree, Sandy!"

While the other dogs were wasting time on cold trails, it seems, Beck's dog peeled off and found a coon on her own. If so, this is a "split tree" in coon-hunter parlance—the crowning skill of a well-trained coonhound.

But Beck is suspicious. She has a dog named Alf that will bark 135 times a minute when he trees a raccoon. Sandy isn't usually so exuberant—she averages eighty or ninety barks a minute—but on this night she is downright taciturn. We try to follow the sound of her voice, but minutes go by without a bark. When Sandy starts up again, her voice has a hesitant, faltering quality, like that of a child who is knowingly telling a lie but can't seem to remember the truth.

"Please, y'all, don't judge her by tonight," Beck says, scissoring her legs across a barbed-wire fence. Sandy isn't the quickest dog in her kennel, but she is usually a "classy" tree dog: up on her hind legs, propped against the trunk, head thrown back as she barks. By the time we reach her, however, her pose is hardly self-assured. Cowering against the base of the trunk with the rest of the dogs, Sandy looks up at Beck, clearly disconcerted. Her only consolation is that the other dogs don't know what to make of the situation either.

We strafe the branches with our headlamps, hoping for a glimpse of flashing eyes. Like Sandy before us, we whoop just once at the sight of scuttling forms, and then realize our mistake. These creatures are too small, too indifferent to our lights and noise, to be raccoons. The fringe of folded white fur along their sides eventually gives them away: flying squirrels. We trudge around the tree, gathering the dogs, dumbfounded. In thousands of hunting hours few in the cast have seen a flying squirrel before. Beck looks up at the squirrels one last time, shaking her head. "I know my dog didn't tree those things," she says. "They don't hardly touch the ground to leave a scent."

No matter: Sandy has won the cast, if only with provisional points. And though we have seen no raccoons, the dogs at least were convinced that they saw one earlier. After hours in the dark, with only their voices to guide us through the forest, we are inclined to believe them. In a sport so dependent on the imagination, why rob ourselves of a happy ending? ☼



Bud's Bubble

The pianist Bud Powell was mad even by bebop's standards

SPEED in music can be a form of abstraction. About fifteen or twenty years ago the vibraphonist Milt Jackson, of the Modern Jazz Quartet, played an engagement at a Philadelphia neighborhood lounge, accompanied by a trio of uninspired local musicians. Visibly unhappy, Jackson sleep-

by Francis Davis

walked through the first few numbers, nearly sinking to the level of the house trio instead of trying to raise it to his own. To make matters worse, a patron at the bar, who was either drunk or eager to show the rest of us how *down* with bebop he was, acted as if Jackson were taking requests.

The man wanted to hear a certain Charlie Parker tune. "How 'bout some 'Scrapple From the Apple,' brother?" he whined before every number, disrupting the band's concentration as Jackson counted off tempos.

After enduring this several times, Jackson fixed the man with a contemptuous stare. Without a word of warning to his sidemen, he tossed off the opening bars of "Scrapple From the Apple" at a tempo about twice as fast as Parker's moderate gallop. Racing to keep up with him after joining him on the bridge, the local musicians were soon playing way over their heads. The tempo kept accelerating, with Jackson's hands and mallets disappearing into twin blurs. Small talk at the tables came to a stop, and there

was an extra split second of silence at the end, before we could bring our hands together to applaud. It lasted just long enough for Jackson's final note to echo gracefully, and for a familiar voice to plead, "'Scrapple From the Apple,' huh, Milt? Do it for me?"

I DOUBT the barfly would have recognized "Tea for Two" at the diabolical tempo the pianist Bud Powell chose for the ten consecutive versions he recorded, one right after another, at a 1950 recording session with the bassist Ray Brown and the drummer Buddy Rich. Some of these may have been false starts or incomplete takes; only the fifth, sixth, and tenth have ever been released. These three turned up again last year on *The Complete Bud Powell on Verve* (Verve 314 521 669-2), a five-disc set of Powell's recordings from 1949 to 1956 for Norman Granz's various labels (Mercury, Norgran, and Clef, as well as Verve).

Take ten is the killer. Powell begins slowly, as he does on the earlier takes, with an arioso statement of the seldom-performed verse, all the while half humming and half grunting an eerie counter-song (a tic he shared with Glenn Gould); the ghost "voice" here could actually be Brown bowing his string bass. After you've heard Powell play "Tea for Two" and know what's coming next, your pulse begins to race in anticipation. A pianist I know says this performance is in "one," by which he means that no band-leader could count off four beats that fast without getting tongue-tied. Powell's improvised choruses hurry along at 336 quarter notes a minute, though a metronome would be useless in clocking his accelerating parade of sixteenths. This is not a tempo you could tap your foot to—who can tap his foot that fast?

Recognized by fellow musicians as the seminal bebop pianist almost from the moment in 1943 when, as a teenager, he made his professional debut as a sideman with the trumpeter Cootie Williams's big band, Powell is usually spoken of today not as an innovator but as a carrier of innovation. That is, he's credited with "translating" Charlie Parker's harmonic ideas to piano, much as J. J. Johnson is credited with translating them to trombone and Milt Jackson to vibraphone. This is meant figuratively—a way of saying that Parker showed the way and oth-

ers soon followed. But the guitarist Bill De Arango tells an anecdote that puts a literal spin on the idea. Powell could be obnoxious as a young man, and De Arango once heard him bedevil Parker at a jam session by echoing each of Parker's phrases on piano a split second after Parker delivered it on his horn.

Some performances of Powell's sound like direct replies to Parker. A good example is "Bud's Bubble," from Powell's daredevil first session as a leader, in 1947. It's included on *Bud Powell: The Complete Blue Note and Roost Recordings* (Blue Note CDP 7243 8 30083 2 2), a four-disc set that arrived in stores almost simultaneously with *The Complete Bud Powell on Verve* and overlaps with it chronologically; the set begins in 1947 and ends with a track recorded in Paris in 1963, three years before Powell's death from tuberculosis, malnutrition, and the effects of alcoholism. Nearly all the important recordings Powell made as a leader in the late 1940s and very early 1950s are on one or the other of these two sets, together with hours of performances from 1953 onward that trace his irreversible decline.

"Bud's Bubble" finds Powell at the top of his game. The tune itself—the "line," as musicians say—is essentially a speeded-up, more percussive version of Parker and Little Benny Harris's "Crazeology," which was itself based on the chord changes in George and Ira Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm." The specific Parker performance that Powell is chasing is probably the warp-speed "Ko Ko" that Parker had recorded just two years earlier, with Curly Russell on bass and Max Roach on drums—the same rhythm team as on "Bud's Bubble." The tempo here might actually be a hair faster than on the tenth take of "Tea for Two," and given that hornlike lines delivered with such velocity on piano require that each note be struck with even pressure and achieve equal duration, Powell's effortless articulation becomes even more impressive than his speed. But the most impressive aspect of all might be his ability to phrase coherently at such a daunting tempo—to think that fast and to translate his thoughts into action.

Powell was no match for Parker on ballads or blues. All too typical of his ballad interpretations, the Blue Note set's "I Should Care," from 1947, and the

Verve set's "You Go to My Head," from 1955, are somber and without lilt, full of puddled arpeggios and sub-Lisztian block chords worthier of the average cocktail pianist than of one of the finest improvisers in the history of jazz. (In contrast, Powell's 1949 "Celia" and his 1951 "The Fruit," both of which are on the Verve set, can be counted among the most winning of original bebop ballads, once you accept the premise that ballads don't have to be slow.) Powell's blues, though crisp and delivered with élan, lacked the earthiness and melodic lilt of Parker's. But on up-tempo tunes of the sort at which both men excelled, Powell enjoyed one advantage over Parker: he didn't have to pause occasionally for breath. If only in that regard, his style wasn't hornlike at all.

Besides, to emphasize Powell's conceptual debt to Parker risks overlooking Powell's considerable influence on several generations of pianists, beginning with George Wallington, Walter Bishop Jr., and others of Powell's contemporaries whose solos often anthologized his. Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan softened Powell's attack with generous amounts of Teddy Wilson and Nat King Cole. Bill Evans's inner voicings originated in Powell's 1951 Verve recording of "Oblivion," and the beginnings of both McCoy Tyner and Cecil Taylor are discernible in the skeletal harmonic structure and implied double meter of Powell's 1951 Blue Note recording of "Un Poco Loco."

THE question of how much Powell owed Parker also ignores his arguably greater debt to two fellow pianists, Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk. Powell's senior by fifteen years, and the reigning virtuoso among jazz pianists when Powell burst onto the scene in the late 1940s, Tatum once dismissed him as "just a right-handed piano player," supplying a corollary of sorts to the notion that what Powell played with his right hand was merely transposed Charlie Parker. Powell ultimately gained Tatum's approval by sitting down at Birdland, the famous New York nightclub, one night when Tatum was there and playing a song at lightning speed with his left hand alone.

Or so the story goes. But it misses the point—or Tatum did, if the story is true.

Powell in effect reconfigured the keyboard to the specifications of bebop, not just spinning out fleet successions of single notes with his right hand but also sounding broken chords and off-the-beat accents with his left. His left hand catapulted his right. The best way to explain its often misunderstood function in Powell's music might be to say that he *drummed* with it, instead of playing stride bass with it in the manner of Tatum and most other earlier jazz pianists.

Powell's left hand was so effective that even as resourceful a drummer as the young Max Roach seems to be there mainly to supply texture on "Bud's Bubble" and his numerous other early recordings with Powell. You certainly don't miss drums or bass on the eight performances from Powell's 1951 solo session for Verve. (These include his first recording of his Gershwin-like "Parisian Thoroughfare," the one Powell tune to enter the standard repertoire, thanks largely to a later recording by Roach and the trumpeter Clifford Brown, with Powell's younger brother, Richie, on piano.)

In keeping tempo with bass and drums on "Tea for Two," Powell's left hand does underline just how impossibly fast his right hand is moving. The specter of Tatum hovers over all three of Powell's surviving takes of the song, which Vincent Youmans composed for the 1925 Broadway musical *No, No, Nanette*. The song was already known as a Tatum tour de force, a showcase for his harmonic imagination and nimble fingers. (Hearing Tatum play the song in a nightclub, Timme Rosenkranz, a jazz writer and hanger-on, once exclaimed, "It sounded like 'Tea for Two Thousand.'") That Powell bothered to record ten takes of a tune deemed good enough for release on the fifth could be interpreted as an attempt to beat Tatum at his own game, just as Powell frequently attempted to beat Parker at his.

Playing the verse, or introduction, in an exaggeratedly slow tempo was Powell's idea (Tatum also began out of tempo, but with several bars from the end of the song, the part that goes "We will raise a family"); he may have had it while listening to Monk or playing informally with him. Monk, a connoisseur of the American popular song, also led with the verse when he finally got around to recording "Tea for Two," in 1956. (Where-

as Powell seemed intent on demonstrating that he could play the song faster than anybody else, Monk seemed determined to prove that he could play it slower.) Verse aside, what most distinguishes Powell's "Tea for Two" from Tatum's is his abrupt bebop cadences and the modernist gambit of reharmonizing the melody into ascending chromatics—as much a form of disguise as the whirlwind tempo. Whitney Balliett, the jazz critic for *The New Yorker*, in one of his periodic forays into literary criticism, once characterized the novelist Alice McDermott as "Henry James without the furbelows and bibelots and antimacassars." This was Powell's relationship to Tatum: he retained few of Tatum's neo-Victorian frills.

Another modern element in Powell's "Tea for Two" is the suggestion of dissonance in his jabbing right hand—not as pronounced as on some of his recordings of his own material but there all the same. This, too, would seem to reflect the influence of Monk, of whom Powell was simultaneously champion and disciple. At a time when Monk was still being dismissed as an oddball whose work was irrelevant, Powell's liberal use of dissonance provided a blueprint for jazz after Parker.

Powell's influence (and Monk's) on instrumentalists other than pianists began to assert itself only after Parker's death, in 1955. By that time Powell himself was no longer the pianist he had been, and no longer quite the person.

BEBOP'S wanton speed and abstraction—its affronts to melody and its cubist approach to harmony and rhythm—still account for a large part of its appeal. But at least as much of its lingering mystique depends on our perception of many of its originators as self-destructive black outlaws whose philosophy might as well have been that dying young was the best revenge against the philistines and racists who would deny them both as artists and as men.

It is frequently suggested in the literature on Bud Powell that he acted crazy because Monk or Parker or the pianist Elmo Hope or somebody in a position to know convinced him that it was the only sane way of dealing with an insane world (early bop seemed precariously balanced on the thin line between madness and

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black rage). But Powell was mad by any standard, from the outset of his career.

"Bud was always . . . a little on the border line," the tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon once told the critic Ira Gitler. "Because he'd go off into things—expressions, telltale things that would let you know he was off." Powell was first institutionalized in 1945, following an arrest for being drunk and disorderly in a Philadelphia train station while on the road with Cootie Williams. He is believed to have been beaten repeatedly about the head by the arresting officers, and consequently to have suffered lifelong neurological problems.

He suffered his first nervous breakdown in November of 1947, eleven months after recording "Bud's Bubble," and was committed to a Long Island sanatorium for almost a year. There he was first given shock treatments—possibly electroconvulsive therapy, which induces seizure. Powell's 1951 arrest for possession of a small amount of marijuana resulted in another extended period of confinement and (some musicians believed) enough ECT to short-circuit him for good.

Powell has been undervalued as a composer, a point driven home in listening to the Verve and Blue Note sets in tandem. His most ambitious piece was "Glass Enclosure," which he recorded for Blue Note in 1953, with George Duvivier on bass and Art Taylor on drums. There's a story attached to the title. Powell had been released from a mental institution only six months before. Oscar Goodstein, the manager of Birdland, had been appointed Powell's legal guardian, and he kept Powell under what amounted to house arrest in an East Side high-rise. "They wanted to be sure he'd appear [at the club], so they took complete control of his life," Alfred Lion, of Blue Note Records, recalled years later. "One day Oscar gave me the key and I went up. There was a piano there and [Powell] played me some new things. One piece really stood out. I asked him what he called it. He looked around the apartment and said, 'Glass Enclosure.'"

Worlds away in mood from the effervescent "Bud's Bubble," despite the grim similarity of the two titles, "Glass Enclosure" juxtaposes to harrowing effect an agitated blues riff and a ten-bar fanfare fit for a king. It includes no improvisation;

Duvivier probably deserves credit for the arrangement as well as the steel-ribbed bass lines. This piece has to be played Powell's way or not at all, which explains why it's so rarely performed. But Powell also composed any number of conventional bop lines that might serve as excellent jam-session vehicles—for example, the breezy "Celia" or, better still, "Dance of the Infidels," with its flat-ted and slightly demented bugle-call introduction, from Powell's 1949 Blue Note date with Fats Navarro on trumpet and a very young Sonny Rollins on tenor saxophone. Powell's introductions and bridges were often wonderful little songs in themselves; this quality may have been another beneficial effect of his friendship with Monk.

It's possible that the reason so few musicians play Powell's compositions along with the usual ones by Monk and Parker and Dizzy Gillespie is that Powell's tunes are perceived as inextricable from his virtuosity as a pianist. But there might be another reason. A first step for a composer who wants to make a number a jazz standard is to perform it in concert night after night. Powell didn't do this, at least to judge from recorded air checks of his 1950s New York performances, which typically feature him playing pop standards and such familiar bebop anthems as Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts" and "A Night in Tunisia." Powell either couldn't remember his own tunes by that point or was in no shape to teach them to his sidemen.

A FEW months after recording his final Blue Note album as a leader, in the closing days of 1958, Powell emigrated to Paris for five years, where he was eventually cared for by the graphic artist Francis Paudras. (The friendship between Powell and Paudras was the inspiration for the 1986 movie *'Round Midnight*, though the character played by Dexter Gordon had more in common with Lester Young). Paudras nursed Powell back to partial health, with the emphasis on "partial."

"He was overweight, sullen, and unapproachable, given to staring silently at the wall, twiddling his fingers when not playing," Alan Groves writes of seeing Powell in Paris in 1961, in the preface to *The Glass Enclosure*, a slim but informative volume on Powell's life and career writ-

ten with Alyn Shipton and published in England in 1993. "He sat virtually motionless, and it was only his hands that moved when he did play. He appeared to have no interest in his surroundings, and little interest in his music."

Powell displayed symptoms that may have been related to schizophrenia or head trauma. He was said to alarm people by grinning or grimacing for no apparent reason, to look out at audiences with a blank stare, and to hold his breath almost to the point of asphyxiation during some of his solos. According to Groves and Shipton, Paudras once "listened in on a long and sympathetic interview with Bud [by a French doctor], at which Powell admitted to dreaming at night that he was constantly playing the piano, and that, even when awake, he was prone to the same dreams." *The Complete Blue Note and Roost Recordings* ends, in 1963, with a version of "Like Someone in Love" that was recorded during a lull in a Dexter Gordon session. Powell might as well be playing that dream piano—he certainly doesn't sound obsessed with the one in front of him. The track is as much an afterthought as Powell's death in New York, three years later. It's difficult to believe that this pianist is the same man who at his first recording session, only sixteen years earlier, confidently tossed off eight numbers in the time allotted for four, with no need for retakes.

Powell never lost his velocity—only his intensity, his sense of continuity, his rhythmic spring. The most alarming evidence on his American recordings of his decline after 1953 was the decreased activity of his left hand. He continued to drum with it, but almost absentmindedly—not to such furious purpose as before. The later material on *The Complete Bud Powell on Verve* and *The Complete Blue Note and Roost Recordings* isn't appalling, just uneven. He would recapture his form and then lose it again, often within one recording session or one number. Performances like "Blue Pearl" and the two takes of "Comin' Up," from his very last Blue Note session as a leader, suffer only by comparison with his earlier works. To ask which pianist's later work does not similarly suffer misses the point. Less than a decade separates early Powell from late. A foreknowledge of this shadows even his early masterpieces in tragedy. ☾

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A CALL TO CHARACTER

*edited by Colin Greer
and Herbert Kohl.
HarperCollins, 476 pages,
\$25.00.*

THE best response to a story being another story, I can't resist the temptation to begin talking about this anthology by telling a few tales of my own.

Once upon a time my father, a less than modestly successful businessman, came home from work. That's it. That's the end of the first story. He lost his job and did not go back to work for a long time, no matter how hard he tried to find another job. What sometimes happens happened next: he declared bankruptcy, and eventually he and my mother divorced. There's no moral at the end of that story either—only my life, which continued unpredictably and incalculably (as did my parents' lives).

I'd always been a reader, but at around the time my father became unemployed, when I was sixteen, I turned more purposefully to books—especially fiction, poetry, and drama. That good, bad, glad, sad, mad Hamlet; helpless, murderous Raskolnikov; Cordelia, so absolutely right and so absolutely wrong; haughty, vulnerable Darcy; monstrous, pathetic Ahab; poor, weak, stupid, heartbreaking Hurstwood! Unlike my father's bankruptcy and my parents' divorce, the incidents in those characters' lives never stood humiliatingly alone, trapped behind the bars of monotone facts. I read about situations and personalities, words and gestures, that rose up into the imagination on layers of meaning—so many layers that all these overlapping meanings could

cushion a guy when he bounced off the hard rock of social reality and started falling. Art imprisoned me in its extenuating colors, and the multiplicity of truth—of morals to be drawn—set me free.

I went off to college after that, and the first semester there I found myself in a course on nineteenth-century European philosophy, taught by a Professor Bridges. There were mostly working-class kids at this school, kids who, like me, wore their best clothes self-consciously and glowingly to class. Bridges himself strode into the room on the first day in a flannel shirt, jeans, and work boots, and delivered the news (this took place fifteen years ago) that he stood for radical change, in the tradition of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. That was fine with me. So long as the revolution had room for people in nice shirts and pants, I would be there. I excitedly prepared to listen to Professor Bridges blow a hole in the hard social facts, the way my favorite authors did.

But that's not what happened. Professor Bridges just kept bouncing our heads off the hard social facts. Bourgeois art—and he considered all "high" art bourgeois art—lied, deceived, oppressed, and betrayed. It offered a way out as a way of keeping us in the system. It did not accurately reflect the forces that crush, as art must always do; rather, its multiple meanings smothered the impulse toward concrete collective action. Bridges was cruder (and more casually dressed) than other supposedly radical professors I encountered when, years later, I attended graduate school in a tonier



academic setting. But his crudeness was just the thing to overrun my defenses. I began to hate my bookish ambitions, and to hate the telltale formality of my clothes. He stripped me bare inside and out, and I sat there shaking with the shame and anger I'd felt when my father lost his job.

Since then, as American politics has moved to the right, I've dug in my heels left of center. And as the culture has moved to the left, I've . . . well, let's just say that I've stuck to "high" art and to its saving complexities—those complexities that are neither liberal nor conservative. Two years ago I reviewed William Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* for *The Nation* and tried to give Bennett a good taste of his own scourge. My father's experience led me to respond caustically to all that cruel blather about lack of character being a more fundamental social reality than social arrangements themselves. And yet no one had screwed things up like my father. Thus, entangled like Laocoön in those layers of meaning, I read through this new moral anthology, edited by the progressive educators Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl—a volume described by its publisher as the "liberal alternative to the bestseller *The Book of Virtues*"—and began to recall Professor Bridges.

In purpose the two anthologies are decidedly similar. Both contain stories, poems, and essays meant to be read aloud by parents, so as to facilitate the moral education of children during their pre-adolescent years—though Bennett thoughtfully adds that he has included some difficult material for children to read as they grow older. Bennett's goal is "to help children achieve. . . moral literacy." Greer and Kohl aim to "encourage young people to read, talk and think about moral issues." In both books editorial commentary highlights the various moral messages that the authors intend their selections to illuminate.

Open these two big books to their tables of contents, however, and they begin to split apart like the primal elements. Bennett divides his anthology into ten sections that cover the moral "field," as he puts it, from self-discipline to faith. Greer and Kohl weigh in with sixteen sections, from courage to love, the sections themselves sorted under four main headings: "Values That Relate to One's

Self," "Values That Relate to People One Knows," "Values That Relate to People One Doesn't Know and Nature," "Values That Relate to Love." The two anthologies share six values: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, courage, loyalty, and honesty. Bennett has four that didn't make it into Greer and Kohl's volume: friendship, work, perseverance, and faith. Greer and Kohl have a whopping ten that Bennett never thought of: integrity, creativity, playfulness, generosity, empathy, adaptability, idealism, balance, fairness, and love.

You know that when you have "work" in a volume without "playfulness," and "playfulness" in a volume without "work," you're looking at a genuine difference of opinion. But the gulf between *The Book of Virtues* and *A Call to Character* is at its widest when it comes to the values they share. Take the booming introduction to "responsibility" in Bennett: "Responsible persons are mature people who have taken charge of themselves and their conduct, who *own* their actions and *own up* to them—who *answer* for them." Here are the multiculturally sensitive Greer and Kohl on responsibility—after having specified that they compiled this anthology for children aged eight to thirteen:

Responsibility is . . . a readiness to step forward as needed, a capacity to make sound preparations for certain and uncertain prospects. . . . This means paying attention, because it is inattention to the hurt, which can be caused by thoughtless habit and ill-considered convention, that produces so much ill will and conflict between people.

In the former you hear the deadly yin of defunct entitlements, in the latter the pedantic yang of the condescending group leader. Both visions of character are essentially public visions with public aims—character as a vehicle for social change.

ONE person's concept of responsibility has often been another person's burden, and fine sentiments won't pay your health insurance. God loves the poor and helps the rich, as my paternal grandmother told me when I once asked her why she didn't lend my father money. But I marvel at how there can be such a chasm in this country over the idea of *character*, with liberals on one side and conservatives on the other. It speaks of an intellectual hatred between the two sides, and as



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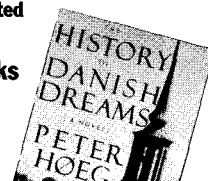
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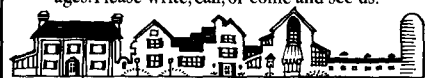
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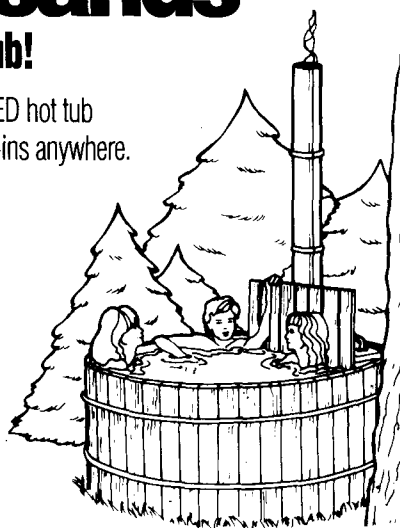
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Yeats wrote in "A Prayer for My Daughter," "An intellectual hatred is the worst."

I don't think of character as a public issue. The public issues that rend America are, for the most part, insoluble conflicts, beyond the art of compromise. You can't have capital punishment and not have gun control; a fetus cannot be a little bit aborted. In public conflicts one side or the other always gains the upper hand. But civil society depends on people who, once outside the political realm, know how to abstain from demanding victory, how to embrace contradictions with Whitmanesque ardor. Unlike the capacity to choose sides in a conflict, the ability to live amid contradictions requires character. And the first step toward character is the capacity to build solitude out of loneliness, to learn how to be alone with yourself.

Greer and Kohl stand for what used to be proudly called the liberal agenda. If I were a parent—and my wife and I hope to be parents someday—I would want my children to learn the importance of taking and acting on a public stand, and on most issues I'd want them to stand beside Greer and Kohl. But when the rally was over, the chanting done, the sun setting, and my children all alone, I would want them to have good old-fashioned inner resources—for their sake, and for the sake of their society. I would want them to know and accept life's crepuscularity. I would not give them treats or favors or hugs or kisses unless they repeated after me, every morning and every night: Life is not this thing or that thing, or one thing or another thing! Life, to put it not so simply, is life.

So I would want my children to be able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, but never to assume that everyone else is able to do the same. I would want them to see truth sometimes as social handiwork but sometimes as an absolute. I would want them seldom to spare themselves the rod, but to go ahead and spoil the poor and the vulnerable. I would want them to care deeply, creatively, playfully, generously, empathetically, idealistically, about the people and the wider world around them, but I would want them to survive. And I would want them to flourish. But above all, I would want them to know that the future offers more than two opposing courses of possible public con-

duct; I would want them to live intensely through life's paradoxes and ambiguities. "If goodnesse leade him not," George Herbert has God concluding about his volatile creation, "yet wearinesse may tosse him to my breast."

Among other things, art and literature humanize us into enduring life's paradoxes and ambiguities, its setbacks, calamities, and disappointments. They teach us to be alone with ourselves, so that we might grasp our "own inborn strength," as Conrad called it, which enables us to endure what we have to endure without sacrificing identity to survival. That is character. Yet—irony of ironies—here are Bennett, Greer, and Kohl screwing a utilitarian handle onto the imagination, abusing the very faculty that most makes character possible.

No child is going to nourish character out of life's twilight nooks and crannies from reading either the conservative anthology of virtue or this recent liberal one. If these two books were all they had, kids would have to choose between Chaucer on the one hand and Langston Hughes on the other. They would find John Donne and Lord Tennyson facing off with Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney; Plato, Aristotle, and Emerson versus Einstein, Bertrand Russell, and Gandhi; the Grimm brothers' tales versus E. Nesbit's enchanting dragon stories; Goethe and Tolstoy versus Denise Levertov and Luisa Valenzuela; the Book of Exodus versus Lewis Carroll. It's as if in the deepest, most luscious and mysterious folds of the imagination, children were to find an administrative aide insisting that they sign up for either Mr. Bennett's homeroom ("Wow, what's his problem?") or Mr. Greerkohl's ("Yuck, he's always smiling").

Greer and Kohl are paragons of character; they know the pitfalls of their enterprise, yet they press on. One of the many worthwhile books that Kohl has written, *Thirty-Six Children*, is a marvelous, impassioned account of his experience teaching in a Harlem public school in the sixties, and I suspect that much of the passion and the commitment in this anthology come from him. *A Call to Character* cautions wisely and sincerely about respecting children's "complex inner lives," carefully emphasizes how "wonderful and complicated" children are, and talks about the importance of avoiding "preaching or didactic teach-

ing" when raising "issues of concern" with children.

But the authors do protest too much. Once you start using stories to discuss "issues of concern," you begin taking the edge off that wonderfully complex inwardness—especially when you know exactly where you're headed: "A grounded understanding of social character values such as loyalty, honesty, and empathy can evolve through the conversations that reading stories makes possible." But what if a kid doesn't want to have a moral talk about what she's read? What if she reads a story chosen to illustrate empathy but remains stubbornly convinced that it's about the complicated inner life of a hedgehog named Georgina? Does she get a dunce cap? A show-and-tell trial?

Because Kohl and Greer are sensitive to the potential for impertinent readings, they've taken no chances. And because they take no chances, a better title for their anthology would have been *Thirty-Six Robots*. Like Bennett, they introduce their selections with little prefaces meant to isolate the moral meaning under consideration. And like Bennett's, these prefaces rarely have anything to do with the literary works they precede. Typical is the preface introducing an excerpt from *Death of a Salesman*, which warns, "If, like those of Willy Loman's sons, our unexamined prejudices get in the way, we can end up disconnected from others." Yet Arthur Miller's heart-wrenching play is *not about unexamined prejudices*. And Willy Loman's epitaph is not "Here Lies a Man Who Was Disconnected." But all that is moot, since Greer and Kohl's excerpt is from the scene where Willy begs his former boss's son to keep him on the job—a scene that doesn't even have Willy's sons in it. Throughout the anthology the contrast between the authors' prefaces and the selections themselves is nerve-wracking: it's the difference between a more perfectly ordered world as shiny as a new pair of shoes, and that precious, dirty, fraying old pair of sneakers (one of which lies hidden in shadows under the bed) that poets call the human heart.

BAD as this is, what is most surprising is *A Call to Character's* deep disrespect for the act of storytelling itself. Greer and Kohl speak impressively about "the power of stories to bind adults and children and teach in depth and with love."

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But they are so zealously open to their vision of stories as vessels of social change that they are closed to their stories' and poems' openness. Gouging brief selections out of longer works, they succeed in destroying any magic or charm that might shield their choices from their intentions. Excerpts begin bewilderingly, without any adaptation or background explanation, and stop the reader dead in his tracks.

What is anyone, let alone a child, to make of a single page from *Northanger Abbey*? Eight paragraphs from the complicated finale of *Invisible Man*? Three paragraphs from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (moral: "Deep pleasure can come in prized pursuits")? The answer is that readers are not supposed to make any sense of these selections. They are there because Jane Austen was a woman, Ralph Ellison an African-American, and Victor Hugo a chronicler of social injustice. For Greer and Kohl, female, African-American, and poor children don't have imaginations, only wounds. Thus stories can "heal," but whether or not they give pleasure is irrelevant.

Some don't even aspire to healing. Instead they teach children how ruthless life can be. Barry Lopez's pointless tale "Coyote and the Skunk Kill Game" has a dishonest skunk who blinds, and a rapacious coyote who clubs to death, some good-natured and very poignant prairie dogs and rabbits. The two murderers dig a mass grave for their victims and cook them; the skunk then eats the corpses after getting rid of the coyote on a ruse. Moral: "Calculated dishonesty can also be a form of group or clique identity, making people fear to be left out." If you're going to choose this as a bedtime story for your kids, you might as well read them the Contract With America.

Or better yet, simply listen to Henry James. He's just right for liberals (cosmopolitan, ambivalent), and perfect for conservatives, too (a classic, good manners). "We work in the dark," James wrote. "We do what we can—we give what we have." And after we have given our children all the love, protection, and guidance we are able to, the best thing we can do for them is to leave them alone in a lamplit room with Henry James—or Langston Hughes or Chaucer or Plato or Denise Levertov or the Book of Exodus or Lewis Carroll—and close the door gently behind us. ☞

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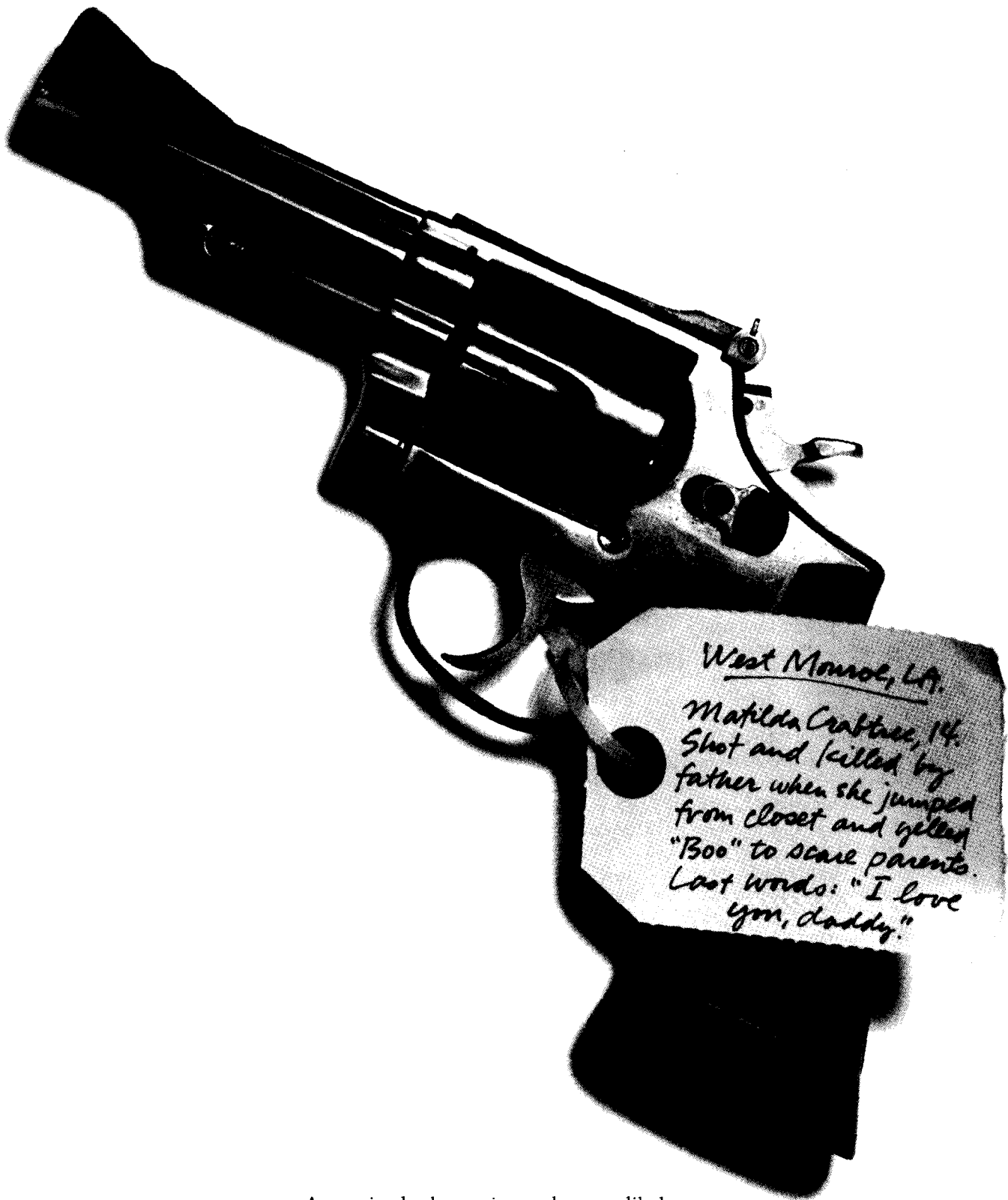
ALL happy authors are alike; each unhappy author is unhappy in . . . Well, maybe that's an oversimplification. Nonetheless, the rule occurs to me that writers who give the impression in their work of being happy and at home in the world do so by writing about life, real life, and trusting the reader to recognize life. Unhappy writers may sometimes do this too, but they invariably have their little axes to grind: they are busy trying to persuade you that people are more sordid, or more decent, or crueler, or deeper, or stupider, or more sex-obsessed, or more heedless, or more something, than has ever been apparent to you, the reader, in your limited and shallow experience.

This idea forcefully presented itself to me somewhere around book five or six of Anthony Powell's great twelve-book work *A Dance to the Music of Time*, as I marveled, not for the first time, at how miraculously lifelike the series is. Its author gives the impression of being a happy man. And Anthony Powell (pronounced *Antony Po-el*) certainly has ample reason to be happy. He has lead if not a charmed life at least a charming one, abloom with as many personal and professional satisfactions as there are roses in an English country-house garden. Now that his authorial career is for the most part behind him (he turned ninety last month), Powell must know that in *Dance* he has written a series that will endure. (The University of Chicago paperback edition, which was published last year, is the latest evidence of the series's staying power.) For an author, that must be the greatest satisfaction of all.

Dance deserves to endure, both because it gives a comprehensive and subtle picture of literary and artistic life in England

throughout the first three quarters of this century and because it is a remarkable literary achievement in its own right. The series chronicles the life—or, really, the milieu—of one Nicholas Jenkins, born, as Anthony Powell was, within a few years of the turn of the century to an army officer's family, and educated, as Powell was, at Eton and Oxford. Jenkins, also like Powell, becomes a book editor and litterateur, gets to know artists and models and lots of fellow editors and writers, marries into a large family, serves in a gentlemanly sort of capacity in the Second World War, and afterward picks up where he left off with his literary career. Roughly speaking, the first three books (*A Question of Upbringing*, *A Buyer's Market*, and *The Acceptance World*), which make up the first volume of this set, cover Jenkins's school days and the period just after; the next three (*At Lady Molly's*, *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*, and *The Kindly Ones*) his young manhood; the third (*The Valley of Bones*, *The Soldier's Art*, and *The Military Philosophers*) the war years; and the final three (*Books Do Furnish a Room*, *Temporary Kings*, and *Hearing Secret Harmonies*) everything after that, concluding in the 1970s—a time that perhaps seems more contemporary today, now that tie-dye, spirituality, and home cooking are back, than it did in the eighties.

Powell has known or at least met many remarkable people over the years. The names that leap out of his memoirs, *To Keep the Ball Rolling*, include Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly, George Orwell (all three were his schoolfellows), Malcolm Muggeridge, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sophie Tucker, Kingsley Amis, Evelyn Waugh, Somerset Maugham, Cecil Beaton, Edith Sitwell, Ivy Compton-Burnett, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Philip Larkin, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Bernard Law Montgomery, Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, Ian Fleming, Gore Vidal, C. P. Snow, V. S. Naipaul, Iris Murdoch, Erich von Stroheim, Tallulah Bankhead, and King Olaf of Norway. *Dance*, however, is not about Powell's celebrity friends but about a parallel universe, containing all the same emotional and social characteristics, all the same skills and talents and lucky breaks, as the universe that Powell has inhabited—except that in the parallel universe everything is parceled out to individuals differ-



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ently. For example, a character who spectacularly ruins himself was modeled in part on a fellow who ultimately snapped out of it and became a successful historical novelist; in *Dance* the character goes ahead and ruins himself, and it is someone else from his past whose name arrives in Nick Jenkins's office mail, out of the blue, on the title page of a thick manuscript.

In his memoirs Powell details specific connections between acquaintances and characters which demonstrate thoroughly that *Dance* is nothing so simple as a roman à clef: that would be the wrong way to read these books. Anyway, the people the characters resemble are not necessarily the most famous ones. Surely Powell is speaking his own mind when he puts these words in the mouth of a writer character (fairly prominent in later parts of the series, and modeled on the unfamous writer Maclaren-Ross):

'People think because a novel's invented, it isn't true. Exactly the reverse is the case. Because a novel's invented, it is true. Biography and memoirs can never be wholly true, since they can't include every conceivable circumstance of what happened. The novel can do that. The novelist himself lays it down. His decision is binding. The biographer, even at his highest and best, can be only tentative, empirical. The autobiographer, for his part, is imprisoned in his own egotism. He must always be suspect. In contrast with the other two, the novelist is a god, creating his man, making him breathe and walk. The man, created in his own image, provides information about the god. In a sense you know more about Balzac and Dickens from their novels, than Rousseau and Casanova from their Confessions.'

But we learn about much more than Powell from *Dance*: the magic of his parallel universe, after all, is how closely it tracks ours. As Kingsley Amis reports in his *Memoirs*, in the course of once interviewing Powell for a Sunday paper he asked him about the card reading that seems to be the eternal occupation of a character named Mrs. Erdleigh—"meaning, ahem, its artistic function," Amis explains. But that isn't the way Powell thinks: "Ah, said Tony, a lot of people had been in fact very keen on that sort of stuff at the time in question, so he had got it right."

NOW, there are a few amazing aspects to *A Dance to the Music of Time*. One is that the reader can get through twelve intricate, notably detailed novels about Jenkins's life without ever being told what Jenkins or his wife looks like, how many children they have, where they live, or anything of that sort. The effect—interesting to note in contemporary, confessional America—is to elevate the series, to give it a more high-minded tone than it would have if the narrator told all, complaining about hair loss and bad sex and little squabbles at the office.

And yet one is deep in the mind of the narrator along with him as he reflects, for example,

I knew now that this parting was one of those final things that happen, recurrently, as time passes: until at last they may be recognised fairly easily as the close of a period. . . . Human relationships flourish and decay, quickly and silently, so that those concerned scarcely know how brittle, or how inflexible, the ties that bind them have become.

And, from one of the war novels:

The longer one dealt with them, the more one developed the habit of treating generals like members of the opposite sex; specifically, like ladies no longer young, who therefore deserve extra courtesy and attention; indeed, whose every whim must be given thought. This was particularly applicable if one were out in the open with a general.

'Come on, sir, *you* have the last sandwich,' one would say, or 'Sit on my mackintosh, sir, the grass is quite wet.'

And, toward the close of the war, when it was clear to Jenkins that Britain was going to win, and that he stood an excellent chance of surviving:

Afterwards, in memory, the apple orchards were all in blossom, like isolated plantations on which snow for some unaccountable reason had fallen, light glinting between the tree trunks. But it was already November. There can have been no blossom. Blossom was a mirage. Autumnal sunshine, thin, hard, penetrating, must have created that scenic illusion, kindling white and silver sparkles in branches and foliage. What you see conditions feeling, not what is. For me the country was in blossom.

I don't mean to suggest that nothing happens and the author maunders on in lofty abstractions. Plenty happens, including adulteries, and suicides, and marriages, and births, and a bit of travel besides—not to mention the blitz and the rest of the Second World War. However—and this brings us to a second amazing aspect of the series—*Dance* doesn't exactly have a plot. Does one's own life have a plot? Well, neither does Nick Jenkins's. Thus somehow an entire level of the work in which fiction writers normally engage is just not there, rather the way gingerbread trim is missing from a Frank Lloyd Wright house—and who needs it? *Dance* is a structure pleasing for what it lacks as well as for what it contains. Everything that happens happens at about the same rate, and in the same undramatic manner, as it would in real life. Readers who want to see the big picture, the grand historical trends and sweeping changes to British life that have taken place in this century, can find them in these books, but such readers will have to decide for themselves what the trends and changes mean. One senses no ax-grinding, just an invitation to enter Nick Jenkins's life and live it along with one's own.

A third amazing aspect of *Dance* is the richness that it acquires through sheer accumulation: this is why one doesn't miss a plot. In the course of the series, after all, the reader gets to know quite a number of people. They come, they go, they pop up again soon, or much later, or not at all. Sometimes they meet one another and go off together, forming personal or business relationships independent of the narrator. People one has known for hundreds of pages, who were long strangers to each other, may have an affair or a fight, or they may decide to start a publishing house, or nothing may come of their meeting—just as in real life. This is, of course, interesting only because the characters are distinct and interesting. They certainly are. And what could forgivably have been mundane descriptions serving no higher purpose than to move events along become fascinating little baubles in themselves. This is an opera with no recitative, only arias. Somehow there always seems to be a point to whatever it is Powell is talking about. Even the details—and, again, there are many of them—are meaningful, because it matters to him to have "got it right." Here, for example, is a throwaway description

of an eminence who has been invited to lunch and who is arriving a bit late.

He came hurriedly into the room, a hand held out in front of him as if to grasp the handle of a railway carriage door before the already moving train gathered speed and left the platform.

He gave a rapid glance round the room to discover whom he had been asked to meet, at the same time diffusing about him a considerable air of social discomfort. Lady Warminster accepted St John Clarke's hand carefully, almost with surprise, immediately relinquishing it, as if the texture or temperature of the flesh dissatisfied her.

'I hope you were not expecting a grand luncheon party, Mr Clarke,' she said. 'There are only a few of the family here, I am afraid.'

Plainly, that was only too true.

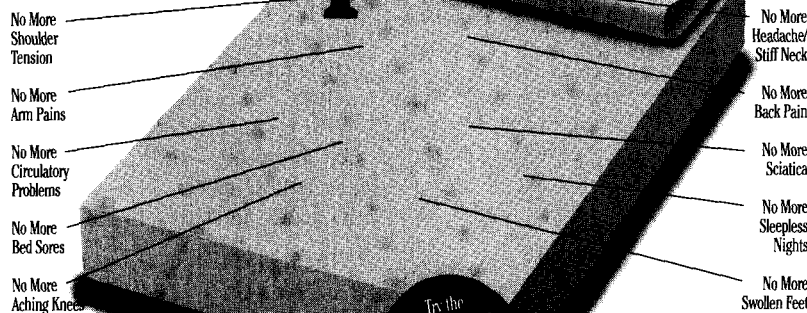
Dance can be tremendously funny, though as I've learned from setting pages that made me laugh out loud in front of others not immersed in Powell, the humor, too, depends on the steady accumulation of detail. Only with enough background can one experience one's full measure of glee in watching antithetical characters meet, or eccentrics carry on, or, simply, Nick Jenkins enter a room and observe what's going on around him.

HOW on earth did Powell do it? How did he even keep all his many dozens of characters straight—never mind keeping up the tone for 2,948 pages, written over two and a half decades? He asserts in the memoirs that he made less than a hundred pages of notes altogether. And yet he always knows just where he's going, and where he's been. In the war volume this description of "Hogbourne-Johnson, a full colonel with red tabs," appears:

A Regular, decorated with an MC from the previous war, he was tall, getting decidedly fat, with a small beaky nose set above a pouting mouth turning down at the corners. He somewhat resembled an owl, an angry, ageing bird, recently baulked of a field-mouse and looking about for another small animal to devour.

There the metaphor is dropped. Seventy-two pages later one wonders whether one has finally caught Powell in a lapse of attention, for the reader is told that another officer, Major Finn, "looked like an enormous bird." Did Powell forget that he had

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already described one military man in bird terms? Of course not. He continues by saying that Finn was "an ornithological specimen very different from Colonel Hogbourne-Johnson, kindly but at the same time immensely more powerful."

Ultimately, what keeps one reading is that virtually every page offers charming, or profound, or at least intriguing insights.

It is not easy—perhaps not even desirable—to judge other people by a consistent standard. Conduct obnoxious, even unbearable, in one person may be readily tolerated in another; apparently indispensable principles of behaviour are in practice relaxed—not always with impunity—in the interests of those whose nature seems to demand an exceptional measure.

There is, after all, no pleasure like that given by a woman who really wants to see you.

One passes through the world knowing few, if any, of the important things about even the people with whom one has been from time to time in the closest intimacy.

Now the war was over one constantly found oneself congratulating people. In a mysterious manner almost everyone who had survived seemed also to have had a leg up.

Thinking—as General Conyers used to insist—damages feeling. No doubt he had got the idea from a book. That did not make it less valid.

One becomes more and more bound up in Powell's parallel universe, until the novels begin to seem like a long, long, long letter by a witty and kindly old friend, filling one in on what has become of other old friends. I have a number of friends in the real universe who I felt would be susceptible to *Dance's* charms, and having encouraged them to read it, I find that we can talk about the characters almost as if we were discussing people in our own circles.

In fact, curiously, no books have ever made me feel more as if I were living someone else's life along with him. As one reads *A Dance to the Music of Time*, one looks forward to meeting certain characters again as much as one does to seeing favorite people in life; one looks forward to parties in the books as much as to real parties. Anyone who has hated to finish a book because then there will be no more of it to read will easily see the advantage in the extravagant length of the series. Throughout the novels the reader is compelled onward, onward, without ever being eager for that long life, this *Dance*, to end. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



Invisible Allies

by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,
translated by Alexis Klimoff and Michael
Nicholson. Counterpoint,
352 pages, \$29.50.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn could not have disseminated his writings in the Soviet Union or smuggled his works to the outside world without the help of admirers who typed and stored manuscripts, provided hideouts where he could work undisturbed, and acted as couriers. It was time-consuming work, decidedly danger-

ous, and, of course, unpaid. Mr. Solzhenitsyn cannot compensate his supporters except by making a public tribute to them, for many are now dead and some he never knew. His sketches of those he did know and his accounts of what they did introduce the reader to brave, dedicated, generous people, some of whom acted out of a desire to reform Soviet society while disagreeing with Mr. Solzhenitsyn's vision of the shape that reform should take. Many of these allies were women—possibly women found it easier to avoid the eye of the secret police—and all of them

ran a very serious risk of abuse, imprisonment, and murder. The author believes that an attempt was made to murder him, and an appendix containing the 1992 statement of a former KGB agent appears to confirm that. Altogether, this memoir presents a grim contrast between the Soviet government's brutality and stupidity and the nerve and ingenuity of its citizens.

At Eighty-Two

by May Sarton.
Norton, 350 pages, \$23.00.

The late May Sarton, poet and novelist among other things, kept a journal through her eighty-second year. It is a chronicle of good friends, correspondence leading at times to a "disastrous pile" of unanswered letters, excitement at the production of a play written long ago, and the eccentricities of her overweight cat, who, given food recommended by the vet because Pierrot "will not like it and will not eat it," fairly wolfed it down. The journal also records the annoyances of old age: uncertain balance, clumsy fingers, mislaid names and objects, inadequate strength, frequent pain, and the admission that "words do not obey me anymore"—infuriating for a professional master of words. Sarton was saddened by the belief that "my work has missed the boat," the boat being serious critical attention, and consoled herself by quoting Hilaire Belloc on his own work: "His sins were scarlet, but his books were read." She remained capable of determining "to make a new start and to pull myself up by the bootstraps and behave better altogether." She cannot do that now, but her books will continue to be read.

I. M. Pei

by Michael Cannell.
Carol Southern/Crown,
402 pages, \$35.00.

Leoh Ming Pei was born to a prosperous banking dynasty in Suzhou, a city renowned in China for beauty and elegance. Pursuit of an architectural education brought him to the United States and Chinese communism kept him here. Mr. Cannell's study of the career of the "Mandarin of Modernism" is less the biography of an individual—his subject is noted for a combination of great charm and impenetrable reserve—than it is a history of the architecture of the past fifty years. It covers influences—traditional, modernist,



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postmodernist—and technical innovations and intra-professional arguments, illustrating these developments with Pei's buildings and the uproar they sometimes caused. His Hancock tower alarmed the citizens of Boston by spewing windows onto the sidewalk; once brought to order, the skyscraper proved both handsome and unobtrusive. His proposal to build a glass pyramid as the new entrance to the Louvre kept Paris in a fierce tizzy of argument for months; when finished, the pyramid won acceptance and applause. One learns a great deal from this book about the peripheral problems, both diplomatic and financial, of large-scale construction. One does not learn much about I. M. Pei except in the character of accomplished and successful architect. And, come to think of it, why should one want to? The buildings are what matters.

Assassination at St. Helena Revisited

by Ben Weider and Sten Forshufvud.
Wiley, 555 pages, \$30.00.

The late Sten Forshufvud was a Swedish dentist with a side interest in toxicology and an enthusiasm for Napoleon. In reading the memoirs of people who knew the Emperor on St. Helena, he realized that most of them, allowing for differing vocabularies and points of view, were describing a man suffering from chronic arsenic poisoning. He succeeded in collecting well-provenanced samples of Napoleon's hair and submitted them to Dr. Hamilton Smith, of Glasgow University, for analysis. The arsenic was there. This finding was first published in 1961, and evolved into reasons for assuming that a supposedly devoted member of Napoleon's staff—Count Charles Tristan de Montholon—was the poisoner. Ben Weider, another Bonaparte buff, who collaborated with Forshufvud on a subsequent book, has some reason for presenting this revised and expanded version, because the earlier account did not entirely eliminate the possibility that the British rid themselves of an expensive prisoner. More-recent and more-refined examination of the hair samples establishes that the British contributed no more to the murder than a stupid doctor. The style of this book suggests that most of the writing was done by Weider, who has an unfortunate tendency toward repetition and linguistic melodrama.

ma. Readers who can tolerate that, and are curious about what actually happened on St. Helena, will find the history interesting. They will also learn how to disguise a murder, provided they can lay hands on the substances that actually killed Napoleon. He did not die of arsenic.

Poles Apart: Parallel Visions of the Arctic and Antarctic

by Galen Rowell.
Mountain Light Press / University of
California, 184 pages, \$39.95.

Mr. Rowell is a fine outdoor photographer who captures nature's aspects from minute plants to gigantic icebergs. In showing his pictures he has come upon people who imagine polar bears on the Ross Ice Shelf and penguins at Point Barrow, and he has therefore compiled this book of photographs illustrating the differences between the North Pole and the South. The photographs are beautiful in themselves, sometimes surprising (a polar bear romping amiably with a sled dog), sometimes amazing (a penguin rocketing out of a wave crest), and always informative. Mr. Rowell's text is gracefully written and poignantly sympathetic to the creatures and the country that he records.

Visions of the North: Native Art of the Northwest Coast

by Don and Debra McQuiston.
Chronicle, 120 pages,
\$35.00/\$19.95.

The McQuistons, father and daughter, appear to be the instigators and editors of a book with text by Lynne Bush and photographs by Tom Till. It is a handsome book, because the subject matter is handsome. Insofar as information is concerned, four cooks have made a weak broth.

The Spirit Level

by David Barber.
Triquarterly Books/Northwestern
University Press, 76 pages,
\$29.95/\$12.95.

David Barber is the assistant poetry editor of *The Atlantic*. A poem from this collection, "The Lather," appeared in the September, 1995, *Atlantic*.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



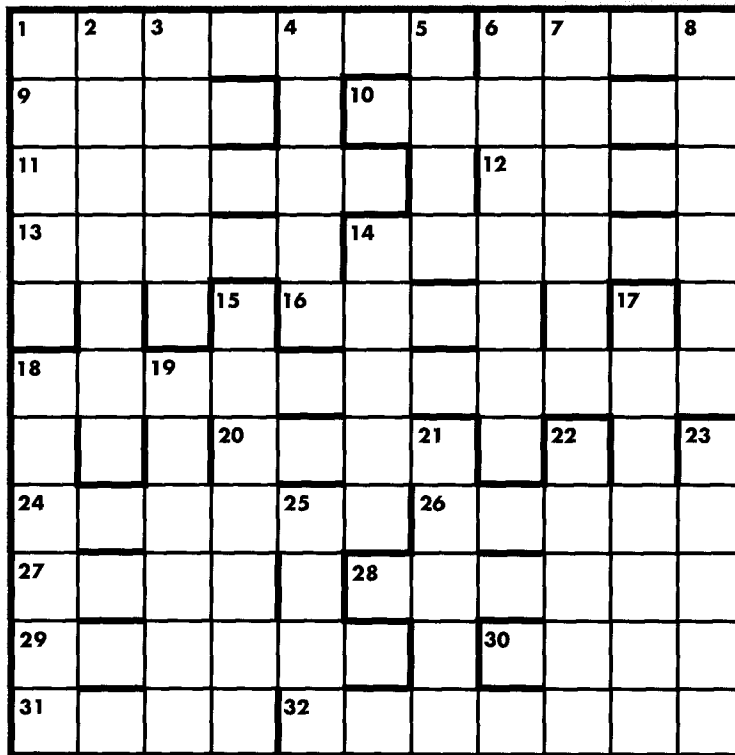
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Starting Block

A certain event may be seen to take place within the borders of this puzzle's finished diagram. Its course runs diagonally from a point to be discovered (the Starting Block) and takes 90° turns at the grid's borders. Together with the Starting Block, it will form a complete circuit. The Starting Block—and the site of the event—may be identified by the unclued entry at 18 Across. Answers to clues include ten capitalized words (a couple of them foreign terms).

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 113.



Across

1. Fool phased out around first of April (7)
6. Publisher dropping name for German noodle (4)
9. Place for a driver to sit eating piece of roast beef (4)
10. Songs conductor listened to (6)
11. Over 100 aboard assist Arctic explorer (6)
12. Mysteries surrounding female name (4)
13. Simple spring water coming back (5)
14. City counts bucks (6)
16. Heal sick biblical woman (4)
20. Older alternative to Windows 95 gaining technician's top points (4)
24. Cuts fruit (6)
26. Open with bad pun, for example (5)

27. Present search party losing heart (4)
28. Hungarian silver seized by army on the move (6)
29. Audited part of a course with shrink (6)
30. Fatigued from fighting over the phone? (4)
31. Within limits, the smallest number of animals on a ranch (4)
32. Purge Church of England after receiving tips (7)

Down

1. Examine patient's rear, bare (5)
2. Rustic country song about dog (7)
3. World capital is below average (5)
4. Fish sandwiches need, ultimately, salt and lemon? (5)
5. Maker of Canadian's end unit (4)
6. Vessel with entirely fake blood? (7)

7. Poetry connected with South American seaport (6)
8. Jewelry embedded in iron border (6)
14. Polanski movie about true ordeals (5)
15. Mailer turned over start of straight flush (7)
17. A railroad spike's in the hole? (7)
18. Drink from pottery piece holding two pints (6)
19. Timid soul taking second dessert (6)
21. Sophisticated petition involving a verse (5)
22. Secretly watch pony's breaking (5) (*two words*)
23. Correspond with a short environmentalist (5)
25. Kiss, hugged by Common Market officer (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

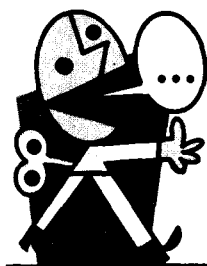
WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

If my eleven-year-old, David, is a bellwether, the venerable verb to say is on its way out. The word like, as in "I was like, 'Huh?'" is one source of the erosion. Another source is to go, as in "He goes 'What?'" and I go "Whatever." I've explained that cows go "moo" and dogs go "bow-wow," while people say "Howdy do." To no avail. I've been tempted to make fun by prompting with "Tell me what she went next," and "And then what was he like?"—but I shy from becoming a Torquemada. What does Ms.

Grammar think I should do?

William A. Edmundson
Atlanta, Ga.



"When I was a child, I spake as a child," Saint Paul wrote. I see no harm in it if kids

use the current kid dialect when talking with other kids, or even in casual conversation with you, as long as they can also demonstrate a command of Standard English when, say, lunching with Grandmother. David ought to be able to manage that relatively minor attainment. Children's capacity for language is in fact awesome. When Charles Berlitz, of Berlitz Publishing and what is now known as the Berlitz Language Center, was a small boy, his father spoke to him in English, his mother in French, his grandfather in German, and his aunts and cousins in Spanish—and he learned to converse with everyone. All the same, imagine little Charles's relief, on his first day of school, when he realized that he wasn't going to have to learn a new language to communicate with each of the other children in his class. He was also, according to later reports, surprised and saddened to discover that most of those other children spoke nothing but English.

I was dismayed to see "the reason why" in your August column. I was taught that it is redundant. Any comment?

Mary A. Mitchell
Winter Park, Fla.

Your letter was one of the more polite among many written to, ahem, inquire about my sentence "Tradition . . . is the only reason why . . ." There's no doubt that, for example, "Tell me the reason why you cried, and the reason why you lied to me" would be better the way the Beatles sang it—with four fewer words. And yet the reason why is no more redundant than the person who or the place where. In sentences, therefore, that one is tempted to "correct" by simply substituting that for why, why bother? Whether the reason why is a waste of words is always worth thinking about, but sometimes the answer is no.

I have asked this question of friends both savvy and otherwise, and have received nothing but puzzled looks in reply: For how long after a person's death is he or she referred to in speech and print as "The late . . ." In the past several months I've heard Richard Nixon called "the late President Nixon" and John Fitzgerald Kennedy called "the late President Kennedy."

Dan Michau
College Park, Md.



I can even show you references to "the late George Washington": "the sort of observance normally set aside to commemorate the birth

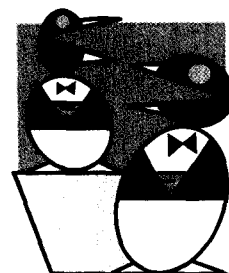
dates of the late George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr." (*American Spectator*) and "belatedly paying Alaska's respects to the late George Washington" (*Washington Post*). In these

contexts late is silly. We all know that President Washington is dead. In fact, as is clear from the preponderance of uses of late in the media, what readers or hearers can be expected to know is the point. Late turns up where people are likely to need a little nudge to recall that the person in question has died. Where context, or

simply people's pre-existing mental furnishings, can be relied on to provide the information, late is pointless; that's why it rarely appears in obituaries. I can, though, imagine situations in which "the late George Washington" would be apropos. Here's one: "In 1800 the reputation of the late George Washington was . . ." Even if we can all be expected to know that Washington is long gone, we might be grateful for a hint about how early he left.

My father and my aunt, both wise, well-informed, and mature adults, are engaged in an intense discussion about the shortened form of tuxedo. One says the correct word is tuck, and the other vehemently disagrees. Please help us resolve this minor but lingering point.

Sharon Jaffe
Blackwood, N.J.



English isn't like arithmetic, where if one answer is right, the others have to be wrong. My unabridged dictionary gives both tuck and tux.

Have you recently had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@aol.com.

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